Week ending November 4 1950 Every Thursday Threepence

John Bull

I lived with the Malay bandits

by JOHN PRIEST

This England . . .

Ashridge Park—Herts

HE WHO PLANTS an avenue of trees, cannot, in the nature of things, hope to enjoy them in their grandeur — he plants them for England. Much that we have and prize to-day comes of that attitude in our fathers. They did not make or build "to last their time," but rather that something worthy should mark their passage—their good live after them. We, too, must keep this tradition of the thing well made, that our children's children may be beholden to us. Even in simple matters it can be done; are we not beholden to some centuries of careful craft-proud men, that such a daily need as Bass (or is yours Worthington) is so superbly filled?

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EDITORIAL

We can fight "inflation" only if we understand it

THIS IS THE TIME for the Government to come out with an Easy Guide to Inflation, explaining what that sinister thing is and what everybody can do to fight it.

For inflation is the greatest menace now confronting this country. It is more urgent even than the war-cloud in the East.

Reducing it to its simplest terms, inflation means price-rises which cause wages to rise, which cause new price-rises, which again force up wages . . . and so *ad infinitum*.

It is a process which is much easier to start than to stop. It has gone on in spasms for hundreds of years, and experience shows that, even though it is sometimes checked by accident or design, prices never quite fall back to the old level.

In between inflationary spasms, life becomes easier and people feel less hard up. Unfortunately we are now right in the middle of an acute spasm, at a time when it is especially harmful to us in Britain, engaged, as we still are, in a struggle to repair our war-damaged economy.

Inflation can have any one or more of several causes. The first big spasm in history was started by the discovery of America and its rich gold and silver mines. American gold and silver poured into a Europe where all money was still in the form of precious metal. Suddenly, to use the modern jargon, too much money was chasing too few goods. There was fearful distress among the poorer classes until Europe's economy adjusted itself to the new set-up. For at first, people's wages stayed back in the Middle Ages—while prices went up and up.

IT was the first big-scale example of how inflation causes distress because wages always lag behind prices. We're familiar with this nasty process now, since great wars are another cause of inflation.

During the first World War, wages rose to what then seemed sensational heights, and so the cost of commodities made by the workers could never be reduced—unless they each produced a great deal more for the same money.

Moreover, the old solid basis of money—precious metal—had to be abandoned. This meant that henceforth money itself would fluctuate in value according to the financial strength of the bank or government which printed it.

Finally, the paper money system of banking reached its first big crisis in the depression of 1929, and the following unhappy years. The only remedy found for that crisis was *deflation*—which really means slashing wages so as to bring down the prices of goods. People again suffered bitterly before prices came down.

Again in the last war, wages rose. The results were held in check because it was difficult to spend money, which went instead into savings.

But since 1945, inflation has pushed its ugly head further and further into sight. Indeed, much of the Government's economic policy since the war has had one object—to hold it down.

Food subsidies and price controls have helped to keep necessities cheap. This boon has to be paid for—largely out of taxes on the better-off people, who therefore don't all appreciate the Government's policy.

BUT two things have now happened to make us wonder whether it will be possible to "sit on the lid" much longer.

Many large groups of workers feel that their wages have not been fairly brought into line with prices. They were already pressing for wage increases when the second thing happened—world rearmament.

Rearmament is not just a matter of making arms—you have to find and pay for the raw materials.

Nations compete with each other for these precious raw materials, and up go the prices. Directly general rearmament was decided on, higher prices for almost all "consumer goods" in the shops became inevitable.

And so today, not only the workers who had a grievance before, but many other groups are also pressing for extra money.

This is an alarming situation, but there is no need to take a defeatist attitude towards it. Nor is it any use blaming workers who know only that their present wages do not make both ends meet.

The only way out of the hardships of inflation is for everybody to keep on showing as much voluntary restraint as possible in spending; and for our industries to achieve still higher production.

This will mean in some cases working longer hours; in all cases working harder; giving up obsolete restrictive practices on both sides of industry; and increasing efficiency.

All these things the British people will do if the issues are explained to them simply and clearly—along with the consequences of failure.

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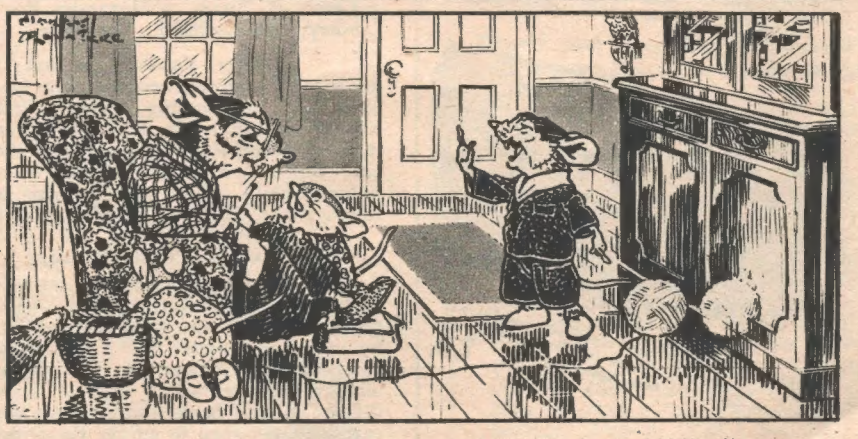

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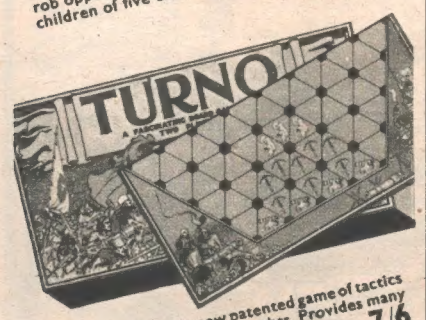

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FREE SPEECH

Civil defence —why a veteran quit

ALL THE APPEALS in the world won't get veterans of the last war to join the new Civil Defence Corps if they can expect the treatment I got.

From 1940 onwards, I fitted dozens of people with respirators, worked a stirrup pump under conditions which were only too realistic, and saw half a city going up in smoke. When the first call for volunteers went out again recently I rejoined. Once a week I sat with the rest for a two-hour lecture. The instructor began by telling us how a fire burned; the next week he showed us a stirrup pump and drew it on the blackboard. We progressed slowly through the functions of the respirator and the theory of civil defence.

At the end of the fifth week I gave up—and so did three other veterans. If the authorities can't arrange brief refresher courses for people like myself, who have already learnt the essentials by heart and by experience, they should not be surprised at the poor response to the call for volunteers.—L. G. M., Eastbourne, Sussex.

Loyal To Farouk

FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS I. WORKED with the poorer-class Egyptian in a Service factory in Alexandria and cannot agree with Arthur Kay that the masses are apathetic towards their king ("King Farouk Hunts For Happiness," October 14). I found in my frequent discussions with these people, who had been attracted by the high wages from all over the country, a readiness to proclaim Farouk a good king. This same loyal attitude I also noticed among the middle-class Egyptians, many of whom were employed in my factory as clerks. The king once paid a visit to the slum quarter in which we were situated. Bunting and flags had been hung out, and when he finally arrived his reception from the poverty-stricken crowd was truly royal. Wealthier residents of Egypt, however, regard their poorer fellow countrymen with scorn and are quick to discredit the monarch under whose rule they prosper.—DEREK H. SHAW, 3 Alexandra Road, Lindley, Huddersfield, Yorkshire.

. . . King Farouk's action in divorcing his queen because male heirs were not forthcoming seems utterly ridiculous. Surely the king knows that it is a scientifically proven fact that only the father decides the sex of an unborn child.—MRS. H. WRAY, 49 Aston Place, Bramley, Leeds.

The Women Potato Pickers

I WENT POTATO PICKING this year for the first time, but it was done in quite a different way from that depicted by your cover artist, W. E. Narraway (JOHN BULL, October 7). We worked with a tractor which had a hover digger on the back and a horse and cart with two men to empty the potato baskets. Eight women each worked a stretch of fifteen yards or so. We kept the tractor and cart going from eight in the morning continuously until three in the afternoon with a half-hour break for lunch. We were paid sixteen shillings a day, which the men thought was good pay for women workers.—MRS. E. SMITH, 2 Wales Works, Marsham, King's Lynn, Norfolk.

. . . In Scotland, potatoes are gathered in round baskets or baskets resembling fish-creels which enable the soil to fall through, leaving only the potatoes to be emptied into the carts.—D. GARDINER, 40 Cromarty Gardens, Clarkston, Renfrewshire, Scotland.

. . . As an agricultural worker I would say that any farmer would be frantic to see so many pickers in a huddle as they are in Narraway's painting. The usual method is for the farmer or foreman to measure out twenty yards or so for each picker and plant sticks to mark out the lengths. The sticks are moved up as each person picks a length—and woe betide them if they should try to shorten it!—A. J. DUCKER, 6 Church Street, Wighton, Wells, Norfolk.

Any Sense In "Stoning"?

HERE IN THE NORTH ALMOST every woman prostrates herself outside her home every weekend, goes down on bended knees, and in this revolting and rather painful position begins to "stone" the steps and path. I admit it looks very nice when finished and keeps

up the appearance of the neighbourhood. It is also very pleasant for everyone to walk on—dogs and cats included. But I'm sure it is of very little hygienic value. No wonder men consider us mentally inferior—it's the sort of thing they crib about doing in the Army. Is there any sense in it?—MRS. ANITA JACOBSON, 153 Heywood Street, Cheetham, Manchester.

Two Views On Blood Census

SHOULD THERE BE A NATION-WIDE blood census, as Mrs. Marshall suggests ("Free Speech," October 14), I think few people would quietly submit to it on the understanding that they might be called upon at any time to give blood. But people over eighteen who want to know their blood group should approach the regional headquarters of the Blood Transfusion Service and offer their blood. I have known my own blood group ever since my husband and I became voluntary donors early in the war.—MRS. ELSIE L. M. WARNE, 17 Fulwell Park Avenue, Twickenham, Middlesex.

. . . I agree with the idea of a national blood census and suggest that, in addition, every identity card should bear the blood group of the owner.—MRS. WINIFRED O. COLEMAN, 64 Adur Avenue, Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex.

"Consumers, Unite!"

COMPLAINTS ABOUT OVERCHARGING in shops, incivility, lack of cleanliness and poor quality goods are common, but people can do nothing on their own. Consumers must unite as the employers and workers do. Consumer organizations in the United States have done wonders advising and fighting for members, yet no organization can be said to represent the consumers of this country. Let us form a Consumers' Union and get representation on public bodies and on nationalised industries' advisory boards.—FRANK SHAW, 5 Nyland Road, Huyton, near Liverpool.

The setting up of a Consumers' Advisory Centre is being investigated by the Board of Trade. Nationalised industries such as coal, gas, electricity, transport and civil aviation already have consumer councils whose members include trades union and Women's Institute representatives.

Sir Basil's Urdu

ALTHOUGH IT IS SEVERAL YEARS since I was in India, I think Sir Basil Embry's memory of Urdu must be a little faulty, for I believe the Urdu phrases quoted in JOHN BULL'S serial version of *Wingless Victory* are incorrect. As far as I can recall, "*Darwaja band karo*" means "Shut the door"—"*Kirki band karo*" is "Shut the window." And the translation of "Bring me a large whisky and soda at once" would be "*Mera waste burra-peg jaldi* (or *ek dum*) *lao.*"—C. BURROUGH, 85 Suttons Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex.

According to India House, Sir Basil used good "soldier's Urdu," although the phrases fell short of full classical accuracy. "As I had not been in India since 1935, I don't think I did so badly," is Sir Basil's comment. "Anyway, it saved my life."

Referee And The Whistle

DEPLORING THE FACT that nowadays there is so much talking by players on the football pitch, a Southampton reader suggested recently in "Free Speech" that talking on the field should be penalized by a free kick. But what is not often realized is that a referee has no authority to penalize a player for talking unless he is quite sure that, by doing so, the player has deliberately interfered with play, or misled an opponent and so gained an advantage for his side. Then a referee can award an indirect free kick for ungentlemanly conduct. But I hope the laws are not amended to the extent that some advocate. As a referee myself, I sympathize with the spectator who goes to see a game of football, uninterrupted as far as possible by the sound of the whistle.—A. L. PARSONS, Durham.

John Bull welcomes readers' views, experiences and ideas for publication. A guinea is paid for every letter used. Mark the envelope "Free Speech" and make sure your full name and address are in the letter.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

COVER artist Richard O. Rose lives opposite some waste ground at Herne Bay, Kent, which is an annual bonfire site. "I get a grandstand view of the bonfire and also of the preparations for it, which usually begin early in October," he says. "Such is the enthusiasm of the youngsters that parents have to keep a close watch on the furniture—or this sort of thing happens!"

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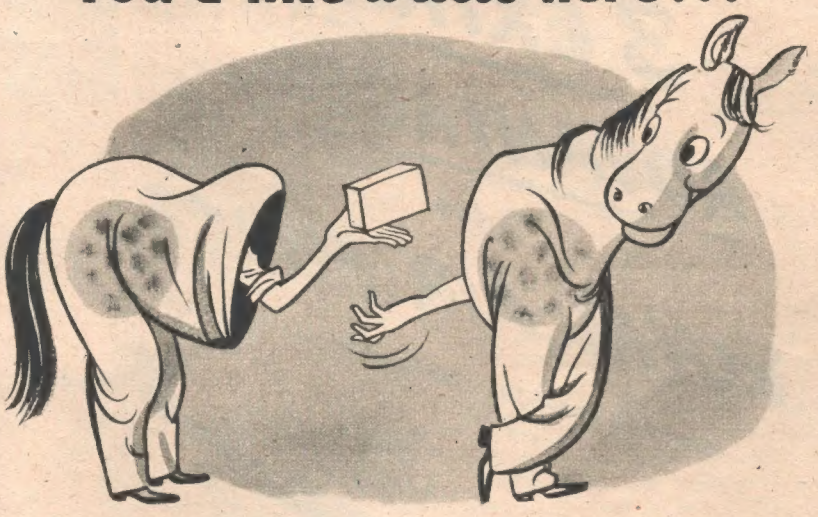

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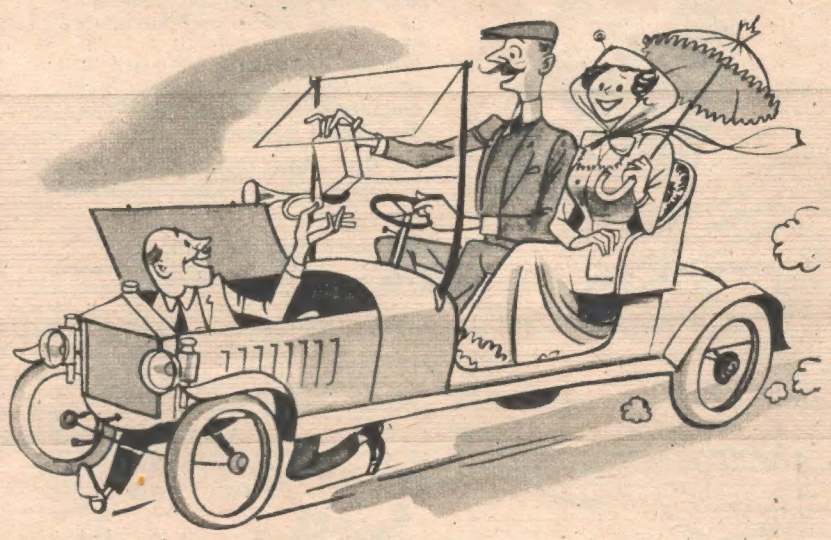

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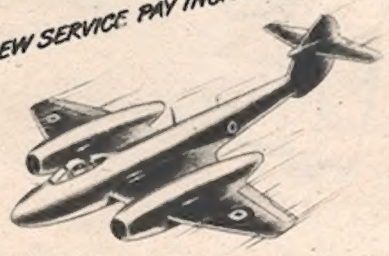

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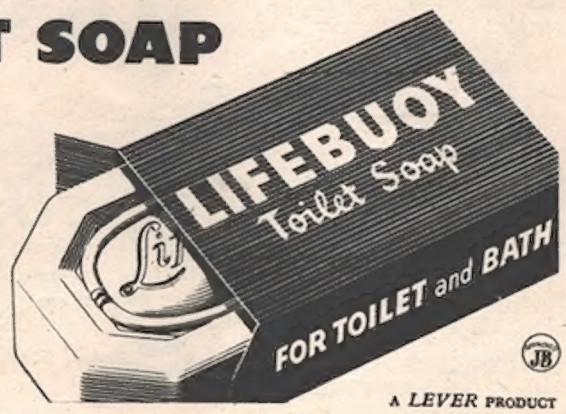

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"How brave are you?" the doctor asked. "When I take the bandages off we may find that you're blind." Jimmy felt a wave of coldness engulf him

HERO'S REWARD

by JON CLEARY

He hated his nickname, and the reason for it. But most of all, at this moment, he hated the boy who used it. A queer reason for saving him . . .

HE CAME UP OUT of the deep black river into the darkest night. His face was all pain and Georgie Vernon's arm was hooked tightly round his head, pressing down on his eyes where the pain was worst. He seemed to be floating, but when he threw out his arm to swim, the water wasn't there. Then he wanted to be sick.

"There, Jimmy," someone said. "Take it easy."

He was sick into something that was pressed against his chin, then he sank back and someone wiped his mouth.

"Turn on the light," he mumbled, but no one seemed to hear him.

A long way off, a fragile, echoing voice was talking. "We don't know, Mrs. Stevens, if the operation has been successful. He may be blind. . . ."

But the words meant nothing as he went down again into the deep black river. . . .

Jimmy Stevens stood in front of the bathroom mirror and put his hand over his left eye. The blue iris of the right eye moved out of the inner corner of the socket and rested dead centre, staring back at him straight and clear from the mirror. He took away his hand, opening his left eye, and the right one instantly took on its squint again, the iris against the inner corner.

That was how it was every time. What he wanted was a black patch, like a pirate's, to put over his good eye and straighten up the bad one. Of course then the kids would call him Black Patch or Patchy. But anything would be better than Squinty. That was how everyone in town knew him now. Squinty Stevens, the cock-eyed kid from Wonga Street. He felt he was the most cock-eyed kid in all Australia.

His mother came to the bathroom door. "What are you doing?"

Mary Stevens never took any notice of her son's eye. She had solved the problem of it, when glasses had failed to straighten it, by ignoring it. Of course, specialists down in Sydney straightened crossed eyes by operating on them, but those operations cost more than a railway maintenance worker could afford. She

ILLUSTRATED BY K. J. PETTS

Continued on page 25

I lived with the Malay bandits

by JOHN PRIEST

On the run from the Japs, I watched the beginning of the terrorist movement. Now for me it means the sudden shot, the train wreck, the road that is never safe. As a planter, I'm in the cold war front line

IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR, I was sitting in a first-class coach on an express train travelling through the jungle of Malaya. It was half-past ten in the morning. I had been staying the night with a friend forty miles down the line and was now on my way back to the rubber estate where I was acting manager.

Suddenly, there was a violent explosion. In the next instant the coach seemed to plunge upwards. There was a rain of glass and I found myself lying flat on the floor with my Alsatian beside me. Firing broke out from the dense tangle of scrub lining the embankment. There were answering shots from the armoured police wagon at the back of the train, and after that, for a few moments, there was silence.

There were only two other Europeans in the compartment—a police sergeant off duty and a soldier—but between us we soon pieced together what had happened. The train had been sabotaged by Communist guerrillas, probably with a charge of gelignite placed across the rail; the engine had caught the full blast of it and gone clean over the embankment. What had happened to the first coach—we were in the fourth—we couldn't then see, but we learnt afterwards that it had been completely wrecked. Three Chinese civilians had been killed and seven others seriously injured. Miraculously, the engine-driver and his fireman had jumped clear.

The floor of the gangway, incongruously tilted, made movement difficult. It was very hot and sticky. After half an hour of waiting and crouching the police sergeant, an ex-Palestine policeman, went aft and contacted the train guard. Soon we had all been issued with arms and ammunition (I was given a Browning) and first aid had been organized. There was no way of getting a message through to the Army, but sooner or later, we hoped, somebody might realize that the train was overdue. In the meantime the Communists might come back.

They did—but not until some three and a half hours later, and by this time we were ready for them. Shots began to whine from the jungle, well wide of their target. The police sergeant grabbed a Bren and rushed furiously in the direction of the shooting, firing from the hip. "Come on, you yellow bastards," we heard him shout. At that moment the Army arrived—a jungle squad led by a British sergeant. Still firing, the bandits withdrew. Much later, a relief train manned by Gurkhas came chugging down the line and we all climbed wearily aboard.

Back In The Palmy Days

In a way, the whole thing had been typical of the life we had been leading in Malaya ever since the Chinese Communists started their "cold war" against us—right back, in fact, to June, 1948. In the palmy days of 1936 the whole thing would have seemed incredible. I was nineteen then and had come out to Malaya because Malaya was "in the blood." My father had been a planter, and his father a district officer.

As an assistant on a rubber estate, I suppose my greatest ambition was that life should continue in the same way indefinitely. At about 5.30 a.m., when the day was still cool, I used to rise and take the labour muster, and then work steadily through till breakfast at ten. After that more work, checking in the buckets of latex (liquid rubber), thick and creamy like white treacle, until *tiffin* (lunch) at two. In the afternoon there was office work: making up the check-roll and the pay-roll until the day finished at around three thirty. Pay was not princely by today's standards, but money went twice as far as it does now. The ordinary labourers earned fifteen Straits dollars a week, and we, as young assistants, were paid about 250 dollars a month (roughly £30).

On the day that the Japanese invaded Malaya, December 7, 1941, I was at Port Swettenham, on the mouth of the Langa River, part of a small contingent of the Malayan Armed Volunteer Corps. On the previous afternoon I had gone to

Army round-up catches a terrorist. Code names hide identity of most Communist leaders

the mouth of the river with a Malay private to pick up petrol supplies. We arrived back at dawn to find Port Swettenham silent and ghostly. The town had been evacuated overnight.

The obvious thing was to escape as fast as we could, but this was easier said than done. When we made a half-hearted attempt to launch our motor boat, a Japanese bomber came unpleasantly close and loosed a couple of bombs. We took cover and then saw the sight we had been dreading — a long column of bicycles approaching the town, ridden by soldiers in dun-coloured uniforms. The Japanese had arrived.

We had to undergo the usual humiliations of newly captured prisoners, kneeling down and bowing like a party of sun worshippers, but the Japs had not time to make sport of us for long. Instead they contented themselves with tying two of us, me and an Eurasian boy, to lamp-posts in the main square. Shortly after dusk, when we were still unguarded, we heard a whisper. There was a scatter of white-clad forms from the shelter of some outbuildings. Then we were cut free.

Our rescuers were Tamil labourers. Before I had really got the hang of what was going on, they had blacked me up like a Christy minstrel with the coconut-oil soot from the bottom of a frying-pan, agreeing excitedly among themselves that I would now pass for a native. That night the Eurasian and I fled together. For a day and a night we were without food.

Some time after that my companion and I parted company. He was trying to make his way back to his parents; I was heading for the sea and Sumatra, which was then unoccupied. That was how I first met the Chinese guerrillas.

I came upon them after a day's forced march through the jungle. I had no compass, no maps and very little idea of the direction in which I was going. But some time about mid-morning on the second day, as I was resting in the long grass, I heard voices speaking in Chinese from very close at hand. I decided to take a chance.

They Hid Me For Three Weeks

Inexpertly disguised as a Tamil, I must have presented an incongruous picture. I was too tired to care, and the fact that they accepted me without question was good enough. For close on three weeks I remained hidden in the bamboo roof of one of their huts while they decided what to do with me.

There were no more than ten of them, but from the first I began to feel that there was something rather odd about them. There seemed to be a good deal of coming and going; quite ordinary Chinese, dressed in white shirts and dark trousers, would appear from nowhere, and then a group of them would retire to one of the huts. They would whisper among themselves for hours. On such occasions I was banished to the *lallang* (long grass) and told to prepare myself for a long wait. Usually they helped to make the time pass pleasantly by bringing me coffee and rice.

I had already heard enough to get an inkling of what was going on; once I had heard a murmur about "getting arms quickly," and it sometimes worried me that, in a camp where open fires were smouldering all day, so many of them walked around with sticks of gelignite tucked in their belts. One day they came to me in the long grass and told me that Singapore had fallen.

I was stunned. They themselves were understandably bitter. "In China we held out for ten years," they reminded me, "and yet you have surrendered in ten weeks." Eventually, however, they told me their plans for the future.

They were not yet properly organized, they said, but they soon would be. Once they had got arms and money the rest would be easy. They seemed quite ordinary Chinese, most of them clerks and rubber tappers, but they aimed to be guerrillas, harassing the Japanese from the jungle, hitting and running and never showing their faces twice in the same area. "We shall base our tactics on this," one said, showing me a paper-covered booklet. I saw the impassive profile on the front cover, and the title: "Lenin's Manual of Guerrilla Warfare." For the first time I understood the shape of things to come.

They talked to me quite a lot about their beliefs after that. "Remember," they said, "that things here will never be the same again. The only salvation now is World Government. If the British *do* come back we shall never accept their rule."

Since I was depending on them to help me to escape, it hardly seemed wise to argue. Already they had a plan to get me to the coast. Late one night they put it into operation. Again I was blacked up as a Tamil and attired in a sarong, and this time an old trilby hat was planted firmly on my head. They gave me a final inspection, decided with a grin that I would pass muster, and provided me with a bicycle. Lastly came my instructions. One of the guerrillas would cycle ahead through the forest roads. I was to follow at a distance of fifty yards. If he was stopped at any of the Japanese check-points that lay along the route, I should abandon the bike and run into the jungle for cover.

Then The Japanese Walked In

We got through without incident, and after a nerve-racking twenty-mile ride we came to a village by the sea. My guerrilla arranged for a small *prahu* (sailing boat) to take me across the forty-mile stretch of water to Sumatra. But in Medan, the chief port of Sumatra, I went down with malaria, and I was just on the point of recovery when the Japanese walked in. I spent the next three and a half years behind bars.

When at last I got back to Malaya again, I was too fully occupied to think much about the events of four years before. I was still an assistant, this time on another estate, and here, as in every other part of Malaya, three and a half years of occupation had taken their toll. Most of the bungalows were by now empty of furniture. The plantation, in parts, was a tangle of jungle scrub. Weeds had sprung up almost to shoulder height to choke the growth of the rubber trees. Once every tree had borne its latex cup, its spout and its hanger; now they, too, had been looted or had been trampled underfoot and had just rotted into the earth. From an original labour force of 250, only forty were now left.

Somehow, with the help of the Tamils (who seemed glad to see us back) and the Chinese, we managed to put things right, but from the very first there was trouble. Government policy was, of course, to encourage the workers to form unions whenever possible. The Communists tried to exploit this for their own ends. This attitude was in marked contrast to that of the Tamils, who had little knowledge of what function a union served.

Any Excuse For A Strike

Every estate had its union leader. It was perhaps no coincidence that those who took over the jobs most readily were usually ex-guerrillas. Soon, at their instigation, the labourers' demands for wage increases, reasonable enough at first, became fantastic, and whenever the Red leader decided to call a strike, the first excuse was always the handiest. On these occasions, many of the labourers protested that since they were paid on piece-work, they were going to lose by it. I do not know what was said to them to change their minds, but when the day came they stayed away from work like the rest.

I knew well enough that they did not like it, for though the Communists have since proclaimed their murders to be no more than "acts of liberation," the bulk of the agitators were not Malay-born Chinese at all, but aliens. Not unnaturally, we took a strong line. As soon as I discovered that a certain tapper was at the root of the trouble I gave him a month's notice.

The Communists had got things sewn up too cleverly for them to take this lying down. For a while after that, things seemed quieter, but at the end of the month my man presented himself once again to appeal against his notice. It was turned down flat. His reply was to paralyse a whole division of the estate by calling the labourers out on strike for eighteen days. Eventually, on the strict understanding that he kept away from the labourers' lines, we took him back on the pay-roll.

Girls jailed for aiding bandits. Many have to choose: prison for helping, death for refusing

Further trouble was soon on the way. I had left the estate by this time, but shortly afterwards, on a pouring wet afternoon when no work was possible, my successor was sitting in the office reading a newspaper and waiting to pay the labourers off. At that moment, three Chinese entered the office and demanded the pay-roll; they were all armed and it was obvious that they meant business. My successor was an ex-Gurkha officer but, having no option, he opened up the wall safe and gave them the wages. After that they shot up the tyres of his car and departed.

That was in June, 1948. Up to that time, I think, all of us had kidded ourselves that life out there might eventually resume its normal tenor again. Now, with the Communist-dominated unions disbanded overnight, we knew better. There were rumours that big caches of arms were hidden in the jungle. Already the police were offering ten thousand dollars for a brawny, illiterate Chinese union leader, dead or alive. The Communists had come into the open.

The Shot That Meant Trouble

The trouble at my new estate started shortly afterwards, at about six o'clock one evening. It was not yet dark, and I was sitting in the acting manager's bungalow, having a drink and a chat. We were wondering whether the emergency would spread to *our* district when we heard a shot. "That," I said, "came from the garage."

"Then let's run like hell for the factory," my friend replied. "My car's up there and we may need it." Together we raced across the compound with bullets singing past us. We arrived panting at the Malay constables' outpost. None of them had seen anything, though they had heard the shooting. They felt that someone should go to the main police station for reinforcements. "You'd better go," the acting manager ordered. As I drove fast down the shadowy road through

Continued on page 24

THE EMBRY ESCAPE (9)

Basil Embry, now C.-in-C. of Fighter Command, was on the run in 1940 from the Nazis in France. Near the Spanish frontier he met other fugitives, including a French girl named Anna-Louise. . . . Concluding instalment of "Wingless Victory" by Anthony Richardson, the book of Air Marshal Embry's epic escape

A free man at last!

THEY FOUND THE VAN intact where André had left it. As they drove to Perpignan, Embry told Anna-Louise of their abortive attempt at stealing a boat. "We were lucky not to get pinched. But we'll get one yet." Anna-Louise nodded. "I know the coast," she said. "We must try all the little villages and harbours."

Without difficulty Embry found the British Consul, who warned him of the dangers of stealing a boat and promised to tell the Consul at Barcelona of his plan.

When Embry returned to the van he found the party still further augmented by two Americans, Wally and Clifford, both in the official uniform of war correspondents.

There were eight of them: André, Philippe, Leopold, Lance-Bombardier Bird, Wally and Cliff, Embry and Anna-Louise, on June 30, with one motor van to carry them and with very little money to help them on their way. The way they chose was along the coast road running towards Marseilles. They wound their way as far as Sette, dropping down to the little harbours. In every instance the story was the same. If a vessel was unguarded and it was practical to take her, then if she was a motor boat she was unfuelled, or if a sailing boat her sails had been carried bodily away by the owner.

Anna-Louise: A photograph she gave to Embry

Every night they slept in barns and outhouses, and Anna-Louise bathed and dressed Embry's festering leg and Bird's back. Both men at night kept guard over her on either side. And Anna-Louise slept safe.

But they were running short of money. One morning Embry sat in a café with Philippe, who later was to die tortured at the hands of the Gestapo, listening to the boy's memories of his home, while the others scoured the town, and Anna-Louise had left them to shop with their last franc.

Anna-Louise returned to the café and she carried with her a great piece of cheese besides the two customary French loaves.

"Where did you get it?" said Embry.

"I bought it. We have to live."

"Where did you get the money?"

"I sold what remained of my jewellery."

During the night of July 2 the two Americans fell out with one another over the temporary ownership of a pile of sacks which served as bedding. It was a trivial but unpleasant bickering, indicative of the mood of the party.

Embry said: "This show's getting out of hand. We've been playing about, getting nowhere. I think we'll split up."

"Not you and me, sir."

"Not us. We'll stick together. And maybe we'll ask Anna-Louise to come along, too. Then we'll go into Perpignan and see the Consul again. The situation may have changed."

The Englishmen Go On Together

He announced his intention when he rejoined the others. There were protests at first, but, even so, he thought he detected a certain half-heartedness in what was intended to be fervour. Then he drew Anna-Louise aside.

"Will you join Bird and me?"

She regarded him steadily, searching for an answer, as it were, in his own expression. "You both need someone to look after you. What's your plan?"

"Perpignan first to see the Consul again, and then try to get into Spain."

The reaction was immediate. "Not Spain. I was there before. In the Spanish War. If they recognized me. . . . No, I could never go to Spain."

He said goodbye to them all then. The last to whom he spoke was Anna-Louise, and she slipped into his hand 500 francs in notes. He pocketed them with brief thanks. There was no need for any profuse show of gratitude. She had raised the money in her own way for a purpose she had duly pondered. It was an impersonal gift, her contribution to the cause.

"Run, run!" whispered the girl behind Embry.

They reached Perpignan only to find that the Consul had left permanently for Nice. So they went to the Préfecture, on an inspiration of Embry's. He spoke to a young and intelligent girl who took in the situation with a glance at Bird's battledress and at once led Embry upstairs to the Chief of Police.

"I and my friend want to get into Spain," said Embry. "The reasons are obvious."

"I understand perfectly, *monsieur*, but there is very little I can do. The frontier is closed and the terms of the armistice very definitely state that no Frenchman in any capacity can assist the enemies of Germany. But there is one possibility."

He drew his writing pad towards him, wrote a hurried note, placed it in an envelope and sealed it and handed it to Embry.

"The name is Ferrera," said the chief, indicating the address on the envelope. "That's where he lives and the note you hold is an introduction to him. He is an Argentine in business here."

"Do you think he can help us?"

The chief's face was a blank. "I think you can try, *monsieur*."

It was easy enough to find Señor Ferrera. From his little dark moustache to the toe-tips of his pointed shining shoes he looked the successful business man, the financier or professional gambler, the *restaurateur*, or an inside man on foreign exchange, anything, indeed, suggesting a millionaire. He read the Chief of Police's note and then very deliberately tore it into fragments and dropped them into the waste paper basket at the side of his desk. "This sounds very

In one lightning move he snatched the passports from the Chief of Police and fled from the room

interesting." He picked up his telephone. "The Grand Hotel? This is Señor Ferrera speaking. I want a double room for two gentlemen, and I will arrange matters with you when I am next in town . . . yes, that is right . . . also your waiter Felix, I would like him to attend to them for the time being . . . they will be spending much of their time in their room. Goodbye." To Embry he said: "You need rest and good food, and I think it would be wiser for the first twelve hours or so to keep yourselves to yourselves till we see how the land lies."

"Drive These Swine Back!"

"How do I thank you?" said Embry.

"You don't have to. All you have to do, *monsieur*, is very simple. Escape! Get back to England. And then, when the day comes, as it will, return." He spoke with astonishing vehemence. "Return, and with victory at your fingertips, drive these swine back even farther than Berlin!"

They stayed in their room all the next day, and Felix, the waiter, attended to their wants. But in the evening Ferrera himself arrived and took Embry aside into a private room.

"The position is this," he said. "The Germans have contrived a security area between Perpignan and the Spanish frontier. That is to say, even if the frontier were open, which of course you know it is not, it would still be difficult to get into Spain because without your papers in order this would be for you a forbidden area. If you can reach the frontier you may find some way of getting over. That I can't tell and there I cannot help you. But I may be able to get you through this security area to the frontier."

"That's absolutely marvellous," said Embry.

"You are not there yet. We all have to take a chance on this. *Maintenant, attendez!* Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock a car will pull up fifteen yards from the left-hand side of the entrance of this hotel. It will be a closed limousine, black, with a thin white stripe along the top of the bodywork. It will be a Renault and there will be two men in front. The driver will wear a chauffeur's cap with a white cover. The man beside him will wear a straw panama hat. As soon as the car pulls up, get in. Not a word is to be said, no greetings, no questions. If luck is with you, you should get through to Le Pertus, which is so much on the frontier that one half is in France and the other half is in Spain. There you will be dropped. There is no need to thank your escort, just get out and again, without a word, depart. Good luck to you." He shook Embry by the hand and left.

They were in position, fifteen yards left of the entrance to the Grand Hotel, at precisely eight o'clock the following morning, July 5. At this hour there was little traffic and few pedestrians. The minutes passed by and there was no sign of a black closed car with a white stripe round its bodywork.

At a quarter to nine Embry was getting anxious. There was more traffic now, the town had taken its *petit déjeuner* and was astir. Then, at the very stroke of nine, Bird tapped Embry on the arm.

There they were, the man in the white-covered chauffeur's hat and the man beside him with the straw panama. It was all so exact in detail as it had been described that, together with the silent men staring stolidly in front of them, there was something both slightly fantastic and ludicrous.

Embry climbed in and Bird followed. The moment the door was closed the car started off. The two broad backs in the front seat scarcely stirred. They drove out of Perpignan and no one molested them. They passed a police patrol without a question being raised, then they went through two villages where there were check points. At the first they passed right through and Embry noticed that one of the police on duty turned his back; at the second they were forced to draw up because of a small traffic block. Identification papers were being examined. The car crawled forward a pace or two and their turn came, but instead of stopping they drove calmly through.

The end of their journey had the same strange element of mystery. The car stopped in the main street of a large village. There was no indication whether this was their destination or not, other than the stopping of the car. Neither the driver nor his companion made any attempt to move, far less to speak. Embry and Bird climbed out. The car drove off.

Spain Is Just Across The Barrier

They walked down the main street. Then Embry saw the barrier across the street and the police post beside it. They stood side by side and watched the cars glide up, stop, make their identification clear and pass on. Now and then a pedestrian would walk up and the same procedure followed. They moved forward, so that they could see beyond the post. There was a wall beyond on the left, ending some fifteen yards farther on in a café.

"Let's get to the gendarmerie," said Embry, "and find out where the Consul hangs out."

There were people of all nationalities at the police station. They crowded round the entrance and swarmed up the stairs, while others loitered on the pavement or lounged against the wall outside. There was a babbling of voices in many tongues, clamouring, demanding, and all to the same purpose—to get out of France. Embry pushed his way through and asked at the inquiry desk where he could find the British Consul.

"British Consul?" The attendant spoke fair English. "There is no resident British Consul. There is a Mr. Dickens, who calls here three times a week from the consulate at Barcelona."

"What are his calling days?"

"I don't know."

Embry returned to the main entrance with Bird. "Where the devil are we going to stay?" he said. "We've got to watch every penny now."

There was a movement among the crowd on the pavement as a car drove up. Two gendarmes ran down the steps and cleared a passage for the visitor. A tall man with an attaché case under his arm alighted from the car.

"This is our man," said Embry. "I'll bet you it is." He stepped forward as the other approached. "Excuse me," said Embry, "but are you Mr. Dickens?"

"I am."

"My name is Wing Commander Embry."

Wanted: Two British Passports

Ten minutes later, Embry had finished his story. "Of course, I'll do anything I can," said Dickens. "But it's not going to be as easy as you think, you know. You've got to have passports to get out and into Spain, if you want to travel openly. And it's no good unless you do travel openly, because even if you did manage to slip through here the Spanish have checking points as far as fifteen miles within their side of the border."

"Well, where do we get passports?"

"The embassy is not permitted to issue them. Our hands are tied by diplomatic custom. The first thing is to get quarters for you. I'll arrange for you both to stay with the gendarmerie here."

They stayed in the gendarmerie for nearly a fortnight. Dickens came and went on his regular visits, but still the frontier was closed to them. It was infuriating to watch the legitimate travellers passing through, and their sense of

frustration increased as each day passed. Then, in a casual way, as these things occur, they chanced on two passports; but if it had been difficult to procure them it was just as difficult to resemble them.

"We'll have to get them visa'd. Any idea how we can manage that?" asked Bird.

"We'll be all right with these bits of paper. We take the bus to Perpignan, buy some proper civilian clothes, have some new photographs taken and exchange them for these. The only risk we run is between here and Perpignan. If we're challenged we shall have to try to look as much like these as we can. Once we've got the new photos exchanged we're O.K. After that we come on back here and go straight through without any trouble at all."

They were not challenged on their way to Perpignan. Each bought a suit and Embry added to his a dark green felt hat with a cord round the brim and bobbins on it. Then they had their photographs taken and made the necessary passport exchanges and alterations.

New Chief Hated The English

"Now for the Spanish Consulate," said Embry. But the Spaniards refused an entry visa unless the French gave them an exit visa.

"Well, we know the Chief of Police, anyway," said Embry. "We're on safe ground."

The ground was far from safe. The girl attendant at the Préfecture, who recognized Embry at once, told him so. "There is a change. There is a new man in charge. He hates the English."

The new police chief sat at his desk, pen in hand, signing documents. "Well?" he said at last.

"I want a visa out of France." Embry handed the passports over. There was a long silence, while the Chief of Police examined them, turning them over and over. "You are English?"

"Yes."

"Maybe you are an English soldier, running away like the rest of your countrymen, eh? I will do nothing for you."

The hands holding the passports began to turn in opposite directions, as if to tear the cardboard. "The English are cowards. They led us into this war, tricked us into it. I would have every Englishman left in France shot. All deserters like yourself. . . ."

"Run," whispered the girl's voice behind Embry's shoulder. "Run!" He leaned over the desk and in one lightning move snatched the passports from the Chief of Police's hands and fled from the room. He ran down the stairs and found Bird waiting at the end of the pavement.

Together they walked rapidly down the street, but no one followed, and in a little while they decided it was safe to move on. They caught the bus for Le Pertus without further incident.

So this, Embry told himself, was the outcome of all his scheming and planning: to be back where he had started, held up relentlessly by restrictions and regulations. He saw Dickens as often as he called but got very little satisfaction from his visits—until one memorable morning.

The other visitor to Dickens's office on that day went by the name of Peters. "An official from Madrid," said Dickens, and left the two men together.

"You may be interested to know," said Peters, "that there's a price on your head. You are wanted—for murder."

"I've often wondered what the charge might be for dealing with those Jerries," said Embry.

"I've been sent here specially to get you out of France. I shall go off now, but I'll return. Meanwhile I'm going to get acquainted with the police. I shall take them into the café opposite and buy them drinks."

That evening he returned and told Embry that already he and the police were on excellent terms. "I think I've got an idea how to get you out of here, but it will need preparing. I shall come across the frontier from Spain two or three times a day. I shall leave my car in the blind alley, thirty yards from the café. I want the police to get used to it."

Then, on July 23, an opportunity occurred for one of them to cross the frontier by special car. There was room for only one. Embry sent Bird.

Bird protested vehemently. "It won't do, sir. After all we've been through together and what you had to put up with before we met—it's your place to go. I can't leave you."

"You're to go, Bird; I shall get my chance. I'll meet you in Madrid."

A Desperate Plan To Escape

Embry stood with his back to the wall of the blind alley by the café and just behind Peters's car. It was nearly twenty to eleven on the same evening that Bird had left. He had agreed to a desperate plan.

There was a deal of singing from the café where Peters was once again entertaining the police. The door of the café opened so that a beam of light fell across the passageway. Against it Embry could see the figure of his friend. The sound of laughter and singing was suddenly louder. Then Peters was by his side. "In here," he said. He opened the boot of the car. "I've got those types pretty drunk. I shall be driving them back to their posts now. In you get."

Embry climbed into the boot and Peters locked him in. It was dark and stifling. The dust crept into his nostrils; then the car shook. They were off. In seconds now they would be in Spain. The car stopped. For one fearful moment he thought he must have been discovered, then passengers clambered aboard. He caught a whiff of the petrol fumes as the car started, and they were off once more.

"Welcome To Spain," Said Peters

They stopped again, and a door opened. A third time they stopped and again a chorus of "good nights." It was difficult to breathe and Embry's nostrils were dry and his tongue was parched. There was a hammering in his head and his heart was pounding. Then the car stopped once more, the lid of the boot flew open, the sweet, cool night air rushed in to greet him.

"Welcome to Spain," said Peters. He helped Embry out of the boot. "Now climb in alongside me."

Once they were halted by a road patrol, but the Union Jack served its purpose and they were waved on. At Figueras they stopped for coffee. Bird was there. It was more than he could at first believe, seeing Embry in the flesh again. By the following forenoon they all reached Madrid.

* * *

He stood on the kerb of the fireplace in the saloon bar of the Swan Hotel in Ipswich. He wore his little green pork-pie hat with the bobbins, and the suit with its too-short sleeves and the over-long trousers which he'd bought with Lance-Bombardier Bird in Perpignan. There was a pint of beer in his hand. There were some thirty of his fellow officers present, for they had heard that he had escaped and was due home.

They didn't say very much except: "Good luck, sir," or "Cheerio, Basil," or "Here's mud in your eye." Titch Pellett, the intelligence officer, kept wringing him by the hand, as if he wasn't sure that Embry was really present in the flesh, and he kept on saying: "My God, sir, you're back!"

Oswald Gayford said: "That's a natty piece of tailoring you have, my dear Basil."

Basil Embry said: "Yes. It's very characteristic. I only want a stick of onions to go with it, don't I? Then I'd be the real thing!"

It was nine weeks and five days since he had left England. THE END

The book of the Embry Escape, "Wingless Victory," by Anthony Richardson, is published by Odhams Press Ltd., price 9s. 6d.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS?

UNTIL the war was over, Sir Basil Embry did not meet most of the people involved in his escape. TOM WHITING, his navigator, was captured almost immediately after he had landed by parachute in the cornfield, and spent the rest of the war in a prison camp. Today he is on the H.Q. staff of Fighter Command, of which Embry is C.-in-C.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT TREACY managed to escape from the p.o.w. column. At night Embry and he searched unsuccessfully for each other, and then set off independently. Treacy was recaptured more than once, but each time escaped. Soon after his return he was killed in action.

PAUL, the French peasant who risked death to help Embry with food and shelter, is still working on his farm near Contes. Not long ago he and his wife stayed as honoured guests at the Commander-in-Chief's house at Stanmore.

LANCE-BOMBARDIER BIRD, the soldier who joined Embry in the train to Toulouse, was flown home via Lisbon. Sir Basil has not yet been able to trace him.

ANDRÉ, the Belgian officer who joined Embry near the Spanish frontier, visited him later in Britain. His son LEOPOLD was missing after the Port-Vendres adventure, and has never been seen again.

ANNA-LOUISE, the French girl, is now very happily married and has a family.

Beyond the barrier is Spain. Embry was smuggled across this frontier in the boot of a car

Gentleman John of Mansion House

by POWELL SMILY

John Cecil could have become a lawyer or a wealthy business man. Instead he chose to be a footman—and lived like a lord

WHEN JOHN CECIL graduated from a well-known public school some years ago, he could have had his choice of half a dozen careers. His grandfather was a Canadian High Court judge and his cousin a prosperous lawyer, and Cecil could have followed an easy path to the Bar. Or, since his family was both wealthy and well connected, he could have chosen any one of several enviable business posts. Instead, he became a footman.

In time, he became sergeant-footman at Mansion House, the official residence of London's Lord Mayors. His friends predicted he would last about three months. "I fooled them," he recalls. "I was there for five years and found the job exceptionally interesting. The Lord Mayor goes everywhere and meets everyone, you know, and the sergeant-footman goes with him."

Cecil looks more like the lawyer or the business man he could have become than the footman he actually was. He still gets a kick out of the number of people who knew him when he was at Mansion House and who do not recognize him now in civilian dress. "I remember once I went to dinner at a West End hotel," he smiles, "and was introduced to a peer and his wife. We chatted pleasantly for a while. I don't think they realize to this day that I'd served them at a Mansion House dinner the night before."

One member of the House of Lords is certain to remember Cecil, however. The peer in question was seated next to the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Lord Mayor's Banquet some years ago. In front of him was a bowl of fruit containing a large and luscious apple. His lordship, hungering for the apple, asked the Archbishop to pass the bowl. The latter declined. So did the City Remembrancer. Then Cecil swooped down from behind the Lord Mayor's chair and removed the bowl, apple and all.

The Lord Mayor Has First Choice

"I have been grossly insulted!" the peer declared. "I shall never speak to John again!" He had apparently forgotten that no guest could be served with fruit before the Lord Mayor had had his choice. It took some time for his lordship to recover from this fancied slight. "Eventually he discovered that I was the only one at Mansion House who could get him whisky with his meals," Cecil says. "We made it up after that."

Cecil intimates that some Lord Mayors take a bit of getting used to. One of them, he recalls, would eat nothing but fish. Thus, one of Cecil's most important missions was to make friends with the kitchen staffs in all the places the Lord Mayor would attend, from Buckingham Palace to Vintners' Hall. "Besides," he says, "that's the only way you can be sure of getting something decent to eat yourself."

At one London County Council reception, held at County Hall in Southwark and attended by the King and Queen, the guests formed a solid wall around their Majesties. In fact, nobody could move into the room where supper was being served. That night the Lord Mayor went home hungry—but John Cecil had been able to find chicken and strawberries for himself and Mr. Attlee's detective.

The Lord Mayor (referred to as "The Old Man" by Mansion House staff) is always the sergeant-footman's chief responsibility. Sometimes, though, he has to contend with unexpected interference. According to one of Cecil's predecessors, at least one Lady Mayoress looked upon her husband's tenure of office as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand her own social activities.

She developed the habit of inviting extra people to dinner at the last minute, and once had 1,000 women to tea. The then Lord Mayor, coming in and seeing the vast crowd of women, retreated to find his sergeant-footman. "Good Lord," he said, "I'm going upstairs to hide!" He did just that.

He Made Them Change Clothes

On one occasion, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were invited to cocktails at the House of Lords. Afterwards they were to go elsewhere in the West End to dinner. "Why bother coming all the way back to Mansion House from Westminster to change?" said the Lady Mayoress to her husband. "We'll just put on our evening clothes now and go straight on to dinner from the House of Lords."

Then Cecil saw them. "You can't wear evening dress at a cocktail party, madam," he said. "It's just not done." After some argument, he won his point and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress changed to something less formal. It would, says Cecil, have been a great embarrassment to him if he had had to attend them at the House of Lords when they were not properly dressed.

The matter of dress is important for the Lord Mayor of London—and for his sergeant-footman, who must know which of the several robes to lay out, whether the badge and chain are to be worn, and other details.

The sergeant-footman at Mansion House gets paid less than five pounds a week, with board, but Cecil says there are compensations. He will, for example, always remember the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. After the ceremony at the Abbey, the royal party went to St. Paul's for the civil ceremony. On the way, the King stopped at Temple Bar to touch the Lord Mayor's sword (traditionally no one is allowed to enter the City of London without the Lord Mayor's permission). "Then," Cecil says, "we dashed down to St. Paul's, where the Lord Mayor and his wife stood on the steps to welcome the King and Queen. It made me feel that I was actively associated with the history of England. Things like that are worth more than money to me."

The Lord Mayor, though undisputed head of the City of London, is not always rated quite so highly outside his own territory. When Baron de Cartier, the then Belgian Ambassador, died, a State funeral was held at Westminster Cathedral. After the service, the police had to sort out the traffic mix-up. One officer, who had a different idea of precedence from John Cecil, said to him: "The Lord Mayor's car will have to wait until after all the ambassadors and foreign ministers have left."

There was no point in arguing. Instead, Cecil led the Lord Mayor out of the Abbey by the side door, put him in his car, and got the car away directly behind the royal limousine.

After retiring from his post as sergeant-footman this summer, Cecil hired a chauffeur-valet of his own and went on a motor tour of Scandinavia. He has friends there, having spent a holiday previously at a Norwegian castle. "I'm not sure what I want to do next," he muses. "Perhaps I'll be a footman in Sweden—or I might go out to the Pacific coast of Canada. I've dressed five Lord Mayors and I think that's enough." THE END

Cecil stands behind the Lord Mayor's chair. He had to know exactly which robe should be worn

SECRET OF THE BLACK BRAE

by

MACDONALD HASTINGS

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL RAINER

Daggers was dangerous. He might be mad. And now, it seemed, Anna had gone to him

IF GABRIEL DAGGERS WAS NOT drowned, whose was the body identified as his, found in the Black Brae? Montague Cork, general manager of the Anchor Accident Insurance Company wanted to know. Daggers had taken out a £25,000 insurance policy a few months before. Anna Pryde, a famous and lovely young ballerina, also wanted to know. Daggers had left the money to her—on condition that she did not marry for three years.

Cork suspected that Daggers might be alive. It was a suspicion Anna shared. She had been half in love, half afraid of the strange, sinister Daggers, an ex-commando and a jeweller.

With Robert Shipley, a rugged young employee, Cork drove to Edendale in the Highlands, where the body had been found. On the way, his Bentley was run off the road by another car. One of the occupants introduced himself as Kurt, a photographer. Cork recognized him from Anna's description as a man who had followed her.

At Edendale's only hotel he met Kurt and his companion again. Anna was there, too, and, strangely, a Frenchwoman, Madame Breuvart.

Diving in the river next day, Robert and Anna found a fishing bag, weighted with stones. They were watched by Daggers's ex-ghillie, a local poacher called Snatcher. As they talked, Robert noticed the flash of binoculars on the hillside. Someone else was watching them, too.

While Anna and Cork carried on fishing Robert circled the hill and began the ascent from the other side. With any luck he might soon be face to face with Daggers.

PART 4

The Stalk

THE first part of the stalk was easier than Robert had anticipated. The action of the stream had rubbed a shelf under the bank, and, thanks to the lowness of the river, there

Continued on page 28

Anna followed Madame Breuvart. Robert helped Mr. Cork down. Then came the exclamation

In business with beavers

by MARJORIE EARL

Neighbours thought that John Peterson was mad when he took on his fur-coated partners. They didn't know that working like a beaver would mean showing the engineers a thing or two

Captive beaver. Only two feet long, he builds himself a home that a bulldozer cannot demolish

AS A SMALL BOY IN LATVIA, John Peterson read a story about the Canadian beaver. It described this resolute little animal with the buck teeth and the expensive overcoat as an engineer of great skill and ingenuity; so much so, the story said, as to amaze men trained in the profession. Thirty years later, when he became a Canadian homesteader in a bleak section of south-western Manitoba, Peterson put what he had read to the test.

"I became," he says now, "the first and only man to be business partner of the beaver."

No novice at engineering himself, Peterson runs a one-man sawmill built with his own hands, which is operated entirely by the water-power provided by a stream running through his property. It took several years of hard toil to get the mill plant going; and even after that, Peterson discovered he needed a dam for water control upstream. That was what made him remember the beaver story he read as a child. He went to the Department of Natural Resources and was given permission to buy four of these razor-toothed animals.

Peterson, a weatherbeaten little man with grizzled hair and bright blue eyes, knew just where he wanted the dam. He was delighted, when he put the beavers in the stream, to find that they agreed with his choice. The dam they built is there now, 55 feet wide, 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet thick, and tight as a drum. Of course, there are no sluice gates, but that doesn't bother Peterson. When he needs a bigger flow he just blasts a hole in the dam. By next day the beavers have got it closed again.

What Peterson likes best of all about his partnership with the beaver is that at first the neighbours used to think he was mad. They called him "Cabbagehead," even to his face. But last year he sawed 50,000 feet of timber for the local community, plus 250,000 feet which he sold in Winnipeg, the province's metropolis. For a cabbagehead, that wasn't bad. "They think I'm dumb," Peterson chuckles, "but I show them. I work like a beaver."

His House In A Pool

The main object in life of Peterson's business associate, the beaver, is to build a secure and comfortable home for his family. By damming back a stream with logs, rocks and mud, he produces a pool so deep that the water does not freeze to the bottom even in Canada's sub-zero winter. In it he builds his house, or lodge. He's such a fast worker he makes the housing experts look silly; a family of four can build a house in a week.

The lodge starts at the bottom of the pool and projects, dome-shaped, out of the water. Sometimes the walls are four or five feet thick. The beaver hollows out a large, watertight room in the dome, from which tunnels lead to the river bed. These are the only entrances, so that when the water is frozen over he is safe from his enemies. At the bottom of the tunnel he lays in his supply of winter food. His favourite diet is the bark of aspen and trembling poplar, although he also eats willows. How he anchors the trees to the bottom nobody knows.

It's not unusual for a beaver to use four lorry-loads of timber to build a dam, laying the logs horizontally across the stream, then diagonally. The holes are plastered with mud and stones, carried by the beaver in his forefeet, which are almost like hands. The dams are curved in one direction or another, depending on the flow of the stream, and the amount of curve is determined by the speed of the current.

Sometimes the weight of water is considerable, so the beaver has invented an ingenious device to protect his dam. An auxiliary control is built downstream and sometimes even another upstream; these are not used as housing developments but just to slow the speed of the water.

A beaver dam is often so strong that it cannot be moved with a bulldozer. Peterson knows this because sometimes he has to blast three

Held by tangled branches, this tree shows how a beaver uses his sharp teeth to cut through trunk

times in the same place to make a hole in his beaver dam. Next day it is as strong as ever.

Peterson is proud of his commercial relations with the beavers and when strangers visit his mill he rushes them off on a half-mile hike to admire the dam. "Them beaver, they be big engineers," he declares.

He is mistaken, however, when he claims to be the only person in business with the beaver. After a fashion, all the taxpayers of Manitoba are co-partners with the animals, for the Public Works Department has taken on a couple of beaver colonies as temporary employees. A few years ago the government wished to raise the levels of two lakes to induce musk-rats to return to an area depleted by drought and over-zealous trappers. So they sent out a team of engineers to survey the region and select a dam site. With their instruments, their mathematics and their technical skill, the engineers located an ideal site and then returned to Winnipeg to report.

The Beavers Got There First

In the meantime, three pairs of beavers were causing trouble in the south-west section of the province. They were blocking up creeks, flooding farm lands and generally making a nuisance of themselves. The Natural Resources Branch of the government caught them and took them by aeroplane 150 miles north of Winnipeg, where they could not be an annoyance because nobody lived there to be annoyed.

As soon as they arrived, the beavers started looking for a place to build a dam. They travelled down one river and back again, a distance of eighteen miles. Then they trekked up another stream and again returned to their starting point, a round trip of twelve miles. It was easy to follow the routes they travelled because they nibbled trees as they went. Finally, they turned up a third stream, travelling about three miles until they found a place that suited them. It was the spot chosen by the engineers.

In the spring, the government dispatched workmen to build the dam. When they arrived they discovered that the beavers had done it for them. There, on the spot selected by the government technicians, was a dam 240 feet wide and solid as a rock. This saved the taxpayers of Manitoba approximately £2,000.

Back in Winnipeg, the red-faced engineers thought of all those years they had spent in universities learning something the beaver knew by instinct. And, as if this were not enough, the beavers heaped coals of fire on their heads. When seeking a location for the dam, the engineers had marked a poplar tree for the purpose of taking elevations. To build their dam, the beavers chopped down every tree in the vicinity except this one. Perhaps they wanted to be kind to the engineers.

The government, however, did not get off scot free. Beavers are usually meticulous about keeping their dams in repair, but for some reason they allowed holes to develop in this one after it had successfully kept up the water levels of the two lakes for a year. Now the government keeps the beaver dam in repair.

In a different part of the province another colony of beavers built a dam across a wide stream. Government engineers intended to build one in the vicinity but not on the exact site chosen by the beavers. However, since the beavers had built the dam first, the government decided it would do.

After about a year it was found that the beaver dam did not raise the water level to the required height, so the engineers prepared specifications to add to it. When the plans were ready, they sent men up to do the work—only to discover that the beavers had beaten them to it. The industrious little animals had built a one-foot addition to their dam.

The beaver, a sociable, gregarious animal which usually lives with the same mate for life, has a highly developed sense of family responsibility. Children born in the spring start to work as soon as they can swim, doing the tasks allotted to them by their parents. If they will not co-operate they are ostracized.

A fully-grown beaver measures two feet in length, not including his flat, scaly tail, and weighs half a hundredweight. His tail is not used for plastering mud, as many people think, but is his rudder. He also uses it to transport logs and to sound the alarm by slapping the surface of the water at the approach of danger. The slap sounds like the report of a rifle and produces a terrific splash. He has short legs and his two hind feet are webbed for swimming. An expert both on the surface and under water, he can hold his breath for fifteen minutes. He belongs to the rodent family and his chief characteristic is two pairs of exceedingly strong, sharp incisor teeth; these are the most important tools in his battle for existence.

Kept An Eye On Him

During the day the beaver sleeps; he works a nightshift. He has small, insignificant eyes and is supposed to be short-sighted, but Peterson says "Nonsense!" He claims his beavers spotted him on one occasion from a considerable distance and, furthermore, they knew exactly what he was trying to do. And they did not like it.

Since Peterson is listed on the government records as a fur farmer, the officials wanted to know how many beavers he has raised. Peterson does not know. His original four have multiplied mightily. To satisfy the officials he tried to take an inventory. First he bought heavy wire netting, intending to build an enclosure on the creek and get the beavers penned up. They chewed through the wire, so he salvaged what he could and used it to fence in his chickens.

He made another attempt to get the information. He picked out a big poplar tree on the bank about thirty-six inches at the base and built a watch tower fifteen feet up the trunk, carrying the timber from his mill half a mile away. At dusk he would go up the tower and try to count the beavers as they worked. He is convinced they saw him and that they took a dim view of his activities. They slapped the water at a great rate and did not get much work done. Peterson even claims that they tried to thwart him by not coming out. For a few nights he stayed away. When he went back, he found they had cut down his watch tower.

Hunt That Made A Country

Although he is officially listed as a fur farmer, nothing pleases Peterson less than the thought that men trap and kill the animal he has learned to depend on and admire. The beaver is the emblem of Canada, and it was the pursuit of his fine, soft fur which opened up the country. When the rest of the world was on the gold standard, in northern Canada everything was measured in terms of beaver pelts. Soon this almost reduced the beaver to extinction and laws were passed restricting beaver trapping until the country's streams were restocked. Today, with restricted trapping, 20,000 first-class Canadian beaver pelts are annually auctioned in Britain—at an average of £10 each.

Beavers are trapped in one of two ways. The trapper may set an underwater steel trap which catches the beaver by a front paw when he reports for work on his dam; many escape by chewing off the paw, but many also die. The other method is to pen up the exit to the beaver lodge by sinking wire under the ice. The male animal goes out for food and drowns because he cannot get to the surface. After a while, his mate comes to see what has happened to him and also drowns. One by one, the children follow until the entire family is wiped out.

When anyone mentions killing beavers Peterson gets almost hysterical. "They should live and work, not die," he says, his voice quivering. Behind his kitchen door he keeps a shotgun. "While I live, nobody trap the beaver on my property," he adds: "Anybody try, I kill him." And he pats the shotgun. THE END

Serial of an epic new book

YANGTSE INCIDENT

JOHN BULL is to serialize a great new book—the stirring story, told fully for the first time, of H.M.S. *Amethyst* and her tussle with the Chinese Communists on the Yangtse.

Yangtse Incident is a dramatic and authentic reconstruction of *Amethyst's* action against desperate odds. The author, Lawrence Earl, spent months interviewing the crew and gleaned many new facts.

The serial of the book starts in the November 18 issue. To ensure reading it, place a regular order for JOHN BULL with your newsagent now.

By now she was close to the house where she had been born. The cameramen pressed round her, and Thomas Jenkins got ready for his little speech

Return of Meri

by ***CLEDWYN HUGHES***

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER, A.R.A.

She was a film star now. But the villagers could remember her before she was so high and mighty

IT WAS THOMAS JENKINS WHO first proposed the idea at the March meeting of the Parish Council. In his time Thomas Jenkins had proposed many ideas for the betterment of the village, few of which had been accepted. Thomas Jenkins was a modern—a man in favour of sewage schemes and electric light and all the paraphernalia of progress. The people of the village wanted nothing, except to be left alone.

They pointed with glee to the little town up the valley where an epidemic had come when the expensive sewage scheme had clotted-in on itself; earth privy was God's way, so the village people said. And they pointed with only a little less glee to the black ungodly rafters and the seared walls of the Old Hall. That building had stood by the edge of the sea, facing all the west winds up the valley for 300 years. Doubtless, the village people said, it would yet be standing had not the electricity been installed. A rat had gnawed some wires and there had been a most remarkable fire.

But Thomas Jenkins's idea was a little more sensible this time. It was a plan to remember the famous one who had been born in the village and who was now making a great name for herself in the films. Only last winter her face had been seen enormous in the gilt frames outside the picture house in the town up the valley. She had been heard on the wireless and all had listened-in and had been immensely gratified to hear the unusual way she lisped a little on all "s" words. All in the village knew why that was so; a fish bone had lodged in her tongue when young and the tongue had become septic and had swollen up, so that it almost choked her. Her parents, now both dead of the 'flu, had only saved her by taking her to hospital in a hired car. Her tongue had been scarred, but it was apparently now part of her fortune.

And this girl, Meri, was to be seen in many of the papers, and one magazine had shown the lengths of her legs about to touch the water in some smart swimming pool. But all the village smiled at that, for it was well known that Meri had had a great hatred of water and had been the only local child afraid to paddle in the sea.

The village knew Meri. Thus the idea of Thomas Jenkins was welcomed. His idea was to have a small plaque put on the house where the film star had been born. It was a small, white-washed fisherman's cottage and occupied now only as an out-surgery by a visiting dentist.

Thomas Jenkins proposed that a plaque be put on this house, with the words saying that *Meri Jenkins, Star of the Films, Was Born Here. Home is Where We Start From.* People asked Thomas Jenkins where he got this last phrase from. He explained that it was modern poetry and so no more questions were asked.

The film star was to be invited down, Watkins the Monumental Mason was to do his best lettering on a piece of marble, and Mrs. Richards-Waring was to be asked to do the unveiling. She owned the local hotel and was considered very fit to undertake this public office, she being half Welsh and half English, though completely Saxon in the tongue and in matters of religion.

Thomas Jenkins wrote out the words for the plaque and took them around to Watkins the Monumental Mason. Watkins was a moody man, having doubtless got that way from a lifetime of brooding over tombstones.

Jenkins was a large bearded man, with a mottled nose varying from red to a distinct blue with the temperatures of the seasons. Now he handed the slip of paper across to Watkins the Monumental Mason with all the authority of the prime mover in this affair.

Watkins had a mallet in his one hand and a little chisel in the other. He was carving the additional letters to go on the village war

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Jean Metcalfe, Family Favourite

Once she was a B.B.C. typist. Then she became the girl back home. Now, to millions of Sunday afternoon listeners, she's the first lady of radio

by W. G. GREATOREX

SOME YEARS AGO A PLEASANTLY serious, auburn-haired Reigate girl was faced with the problem of what to do on leaving school. "I want a job where I can be shut away from everything," she told her father, who had other ideas. "Nonsense!" he replied. "You'll learn to type like all the other girls."

Obediently, Jean Metcalfe did just that. Then she found a job as a typist with the B.B.C. This was in 1940. She had been on the B.B.C. staff for three years when, one spring day, a girl came over to her desk and whispered excitedly: "Jean, guess what? They want you to do a microphone test!"

"I don't know whose idea it was," Jean says now. "They were looking for women announcers and somebody must have heard me on the phone and put my name forward."

Today, as a result of that test—and obliquely as a result of her father's insistence that she should learn to type—this eager, confident twenty-seven year old can count a loyal following among the 16,000,000 listeners who tune in every Sunday afternoon to the two-way *Family Favourites* programme.

She still gets letters from ex-Servicemen who remember her as "the girl back home" in the *Forces Favourites* series during the war. And, shortly after her recent appointment to an important job on *Woman's Hour*, a B.B.C. executive remarked: "Jean is well on the way to becoming the first lady of radio—if she isn't that already."

What seems to matter even more to her is that compèring *Family Favourites* has enabled her to fulfil an old ambition, since on it she works "shut away from everything." She conducts the programme from a compact, glass-panelled cubicle, hidden monastically in the warren below Broadcasting House. Down there, for at least six hours a week on her turns as continuity announcer, she sorts through her share of the 6,000 postcards that pour in from Sunday to Sunday asking for favourite records for aged relatives, youngsters in hospital, the blind and the dangerously ill. "It's easy to get a lot of work done in a place like this," she declares.

The fan-mail she receives seems to indicate that no other B.B.C. voice can carry the messages that go with chosen melodies with so much earnest sympathy. Her voice is firm and full of conviction. Whatever the request—classical, jazz, swing, choral or crooning—and whether it is prompted by love, infatuation, bereavement, enforced separation or plain good neighbourliness, it is introduced with an unsophisticated dignity that keeps the programme clear of sentimentality and sensationalism.

However, not all the letters she gets are adulatory. One man wrote from Bristol: "I must really be frank. I don't like the programme or the sickly bathos you lay on in those condescending tones. But my wife would like you to play some popular tune of the twenties." And a woman listener declared tersely: "I can't stand the sound of your voice."

Miss Metcalfe's disposition to court privacy in her job is not due to aloofness or escapism. The fact is that she often talks things over with fans and admirers on the pavement outside the B.B.C. They are inclined to lobby her there with their personal problems, or in an effort to get extra attention for their musical favourites.

She Guards Against Favouritism

A few Sundays ago, three war-beribboned London policemen were waiting outside as she came off duty. Their spokesman touched his helmet and said, "Miss Metcalfe, we've been wondering why you don't play any Phil Harris records. You've never put on 'Never, Never Trust a Woman.'" The following Sunday it was played. "But it had been genuinely requested in the usual way," Miss Metcalfe points out. "It was just a coincidence that the policemen had mentioned it."

Her uncompromising policy of "no favouritism" is prompted by a guilty conscience, for Jean admits that she worries over the inevitable disappointments caused by the many requests which cannot be granted.

She also takes great care to see that no *Family Favourites* requests are carried over until the following week. "It's so easy to hurt people," she says. One young overseas soldier had requested the broadcasting of a sentimental tune for his girl, but by the time it went on the air they had broken their engagement. On another occasion a military policeman had asked her to play "I Only Have Eyes For You" for his girl friend, Joan. On the Saturday before the broadcast there came a telegram: *Cancel Joan* (it said) *Substitute Elsie.*

No Script At The Microphone

Miss Metcalfe works every Sunday from eleven in the morning until seven or eight at night, taking *Family Favourites* in her stride in an almost unbroken spell of duty at the announcer's table. She eats on the job, now and then gulping down a hot potato when the red light flashes unexpectedly. On *Favourites*, she never uses a script, and goes through the selected postcards and records with the casual efficiency of a born broadcaster. She is noted for her coolness and self-possession at the microphone, but she has been known to slip up.

Once an Essex housewife wrote saying she was in hospital and would they play "Triplets" for her husband. She also asked that two relatives should be thanked for their congratulations. After reading the request, Jean added, "And here are my congratulations, too, Mrs. Tamplin. I hope you're *all* doing well." By the next post a letter came explaining that Mrs. Tamplin and her husband had recently celebrated their golden wedding, and that Mr. Tamplin was one

In the B.B.C. canteen, Jean Metcalfe meets two wartime listeners—a sailor in mufti and an airman

Jean with Cliff Michelmore—once her opposite number in Hamburg, now her husband

of triplets. "I'm careful now," Miss Metcalfe says, "not to read too much into requests."

Several months after Jean deserted her typewriter for the microphone—in November, 1943—she joined Barbara McFadden, Joan Griffiths and Marjorie Anderson on *Forces Favourites*, the creation of Tom Chalmers, soon to become Light Programme Controller. The idea was to make the troops feel less far from home. Soon, in slit trenches, desert outposts, aboard destroyers at sea and on far distant airfields, Servicemen by the hundred thousand were listening in on sets ranging from Service receivers to battered wonders strung together by "morse-bashers."

Letters poured in with requests for favourite records for families and girl friends. "We even got letters from prisoners-of-war," Miss Metcalfe recalls, "forwarded through their near relatives, telling us how they listened on forbidden sets. One lot listened on a set fitted inside a wooden leg." The troops were so attached to the programme that tank men in the desert were forbidden to tune in to it when in action.

In fact, one tank driver called Mervyn got so preoccupied with Jean's voice that he allowed his vehicle to crash. The rest of his squadron went on, and ran into an ambush, resulting in casualties. Mervyn lost two stripes, but, as he later wrote to Jean: "I am, thank God, intact."

Gifts Of Coconuts And Hats

Men on leave took to calling at the B.B.C. One thick-set able seaman brought a load of coconuts for Miss Metcalfe. Others left their tropical hats as a gesture of appreciation. Proposals of marriage came in by the dozen and she had to sidetrack so many suitors that one of the most respected B.B.C. personalities was moved to remark, "Morale is collapsing on all fronts."

Actually, of course, the programme was doing a lot to sustain the spirits of the fighting men. Miss Metcalfe and her colleagues were constantly careful to avoid giving any impression that things were not too good at home. The programme was not only a reassurance in that way: some wives and sweethearts considered it a medium for indicating their fidelity.

"One day I got a request I simply had to play," Jean recalls. It had come from a young Tyneside wife. It read: "I told Jim that if mail wasn't getting through when our child came along, I'd tell him through *Forces Favourites*—'Blue Champagne' for a boy and 'Pink Lady Waltz' for a girl." Jean was rewarded with a piece of christening cake.

There was another less appealing plot in which she and her colleagues naïvely collaborated. "The boys used a lot of slang in asking for records," she says. "Then one stoker wrote to me enclosing a glossary of slang. We had been saying the most terrible things in our prim way."

The Phrase That Meant A Lot

When *Forces Favourites* closed down in October, 1945, *Family Favourites* had been under way for two months, with male announcers in both London and Hamburg. Then the B.B.C. decided to have a woman at the civilian end. Jean was automatically the choice. Nearly always, she ends her call to Germany with, "Take care of yourselves." The phrase must have signified much more than most listeners guessed during the months that Cliff Michelmore was the Hamburg voice.

Even on his last Sunday there, when Jean called, "Well, Cliff, I do hope you enjoy your holiday," nobody except a few close friends guessed he was coming home to get engaged to his opposite number. The two had made up their minds months before, shortly after Cliff decided when on leave to look in on the London end. They were married last March. Michelmore is now working with the B.B.C.—under contract.

Jean has a laconic answer for those who advise her that she could multiply her salary by leaving the B.B.C. staff and working as an outsider. "It's enough to have one freelance in any family," she says. THE END

I WAS A FIRST OFFENDER (3)

"Doing time" meant utterly wasting it

ANONYMOUS

Sexy books to read, the wrong films, frustrating work, too much hanging about—the end is real demoralization. . . . Continuing John Bull's revealing series on prison life as seen from within

ILLUSTRATION BY ZELINSKI

THE ONE BRIGHT FEATURE of Wormwood Scrubs is the prison hospital. Prisoners from all over the country are transferred there when they need operations or treatment beyond the resources of their own medical officer. Exceptions are made only in emergencies, when the prisoner is taken under guard to the local hospital. All the rest come to the Scrubs.

I found my three weeks' stay a pleasure, though the cause of it certainly was not. One morning I reported sick with a pain in the chest. The doctor made a quick examination, diagnosed pleurisy and packed me off to hospital. It was now that I found the only cause for complaint. Although I did not know it at the time, pleurisy can be a forerunner of T.B., and I was given every possible test for this with the exception of an X-ray. There is no apparatus in the prison hospital and, whenever a patient requires it, he is taken to the Hammersmith Hospital near by. As I was not allowed to move from my bed, I was, perhaps, too ill to be taken there. Nevertheless, I was denied the most important test for a very serious disease.

Except for the heavy, iron-barred door, my cell might have been taken for a private ward in an ordinary hospital. The furniture was certainly of this type. Books were brought to me, the newspaper was delivered every morning and the attentions of the medical orderlies, all warders, were overwhelming. Three times a day, the M.O.s—sometimes three different ones—came to visit me. After months of shouting, swearing warders in the prison itself, it was almost worth having pleurisy to be treated like a human being again.

Nurses Brighten Up The Wards

The hospital can take, I believe, about 100 patients. There are several resident doctors and, apart from the warder-orderlies, all of whom have passed a special course, there are several women nurses—a bright and thoughtful touch for sick men who rarely see a female face.

When I was eventually allowed to walk about, however, I saw several distressing sights. One section of the hospital is reserved for T.B. prisoners. Bad cases are confined to bed, but those who were allowed to get up worked a few hours each day in the hospital gardens. I could not help wondering why, whatever they had done, these men could not be sent to an appropriate sanatorium outside London.

Another section is reserved for "nut cases." Here, in small, padded cells, men who are exceptionally violent or who have attempted suicide are kept under observation. From time to time, prisoners with a persecution complex are brought in and, under the influence of understanding warders, returned to normality.

Here, too, I found one of my best friends undergoing treatment for alcoholism. Well known in the Midlands as the managing director of a firm of manufacturers, he had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment after his second motoring accident while drunk.

However well the bodies of prisoners are looked after, their souls are equally well catered for at Wormwood Scrubs. Every prisoner states his religion on admission. About five per cent register as of no religion. Of the rest, about seventy per cent are Church of England, ten per cent Roman Catholics, five per cent Jews and the rest belong to smaller sects. As well as compulsory Church services on Sunday mornings and afternoons, there are mid-week services for the devout. Synagogue services are held on Saturday afternoons and Thursday mornings. There are full-time Church of England chaplains and visiting Roman Catholic priests and Jewish ministers. The Church of England chaplain also holds confirmation and Bible classes, which are well attended, considering where they are held.

Studying For Priesthood In Jail

About once in three weeks, there are Sunday afternoon concerts, usually of religious choirs. In addition, the library provides Bibles, prayer-books and an extremely wide choice of books on theological subjects for private devotion. At least one man was able to study for the priesthood with the books available. He was supervised by a defrocked bishop, sentenced for converting the funds of a religious publication.

Besides an excellent choir led by a choirmaster who has not missed a Sunday for twenty years, there is an organ and a piano. On all holy days and festivals, special services are held. Christmas is made a special occasion for Christian prisoners and so are the equivalent holidays for Jews. The few Moslem prisoners, mainly Indian or Pakistani seamen, are not catered for.

In addition to religion, the Church of England chaplain has several other duties. For instance, I discovered quite early in my stay at the Scrubs that if I wanted something better to read than the two books left indiscriminately in my cell twice a week, I should have to apply to him.

The prison library is quite a good one. As well as several thousand novels, there are shelves of poetry, plays, biography, history, politics, travel, philosophy, economics, science and art. There is a very large section of religious writings of all denominations and another of books for learning languages ranging from French to Sanskrit. Very much in demand are the numerous books on trades and occupations. Before the reader can take advantage of any of these books, he must first apply to the chaplain for permission to have one or two books on one or two subjects in his cell. The chaplain records the application in a book and sends it to the library officer. He hands it to the leader in charge of the library, who records it in another book. It is then handed over to the prisoner who gives out the specialized books.

Then comes the anticlimax. A book is picked at random from the section the reader has indicated. Nine times out of ten, it is useless. He has read it before, or it deals with an aspect of the subject in which he is not interested. Thus, one of the few opportunities for rehabilitating the prisoner is completely wasted.

Some Of The Books Astonished Me

While working in the library, I took the opportunity of browsing through the shelves. I was astonished by the presence of some of the books. Whoever the members of the book-choosing committee may be, I can only suggest that they are out of touch with the mentality of prisoners. A large proportion of the books are of the cheap, semi-pornographic American gangster type and, in general, sex is the dominating theme. Invariably scrawled in the margins are crude observations about the characters — especially women — indications of where the spicier passages are and primitive

"In the workshops, there was the same wastage of time, money and materials. Newcomers were afraid of attracting attention by asking for advice"

drawings of imagined sexual scenes. From time to time, the pages are cleaned with an india-rubber, but I feel that the impression left on prisoners' minds cannot be erased so easily.

Among the chaplain's duties is that of arranging the entertainments held in the Recreation Hall, commonly known as the Rec. The prisoners allowed to use it are leaders, redbands and men in the final stages of their sentences. When a man reaches the Rec stage, he is transferred from C Hall, where newcomers are kept, to the section of A Hall not reserved for young remands. Here are packed, three to a cell, prisoners who are supposed to be privileged. Personally, I sighed for the good old unprivileged days when I had the same sized cell to myself.

Since conditions are so bad, Rec men are kept as long as possible out of their cells. Hence, the Rec itself is the main centre of activity outside working hours. Men have their meals sitting twelve to a table, play such games as chess, draughts and dominoes, read books they choose themselves from a small Rec library and write letters. Some study privately or teach others such subjects as languages, book-keeping and mathematics. Here, too, prisoners may learn how to crack a crib and get away with it. The system has its drawbacks and its advantages. On the whole, prisoners prefer it to being locked up for long periods during the day.

Attached to the Rec is a large hut where table-tennis is played. There is also a stage where visiting amateur companies put on plays once a month on Sunday afternoons. Theatrical and sporting celebrities occasionally give lectures and one-man shows. Films are sometimes shown on Sunday afternoons.

Both the two plays put on during the three months I was on Rec were suggestive bedroom farces. I am certainly no prude, but it seemed to me completely out of place on a Sunday afternoon, after a Church service, that a play of this sort should be presented to 200 sex-starved young men. There is no option. They have to see it whether they want to or not.

Girls Who Are The Butt Of Jokes

I made inquiries and learnt that these shows were typical. My greatest sympathy was reserved for the unfortunate young women on the stage, who, thinking they were doing the convicts of Wormwood Scrubs a Christian service by entertaining them, made themselves the butt of the crudest and most disgusting humour I ever heard in prison. The two films I saw were no better. They were of the usual sex-stimulant type that have little effect on one outside. In prison, they are most frustrating. To many of us this "entertainment" was a form of additional punishment. I must add, in fairness, that the evening lectures were on a higher level.

Yet another duty of the chaplain is the organization of evening classes, which are held five times a week in such subjects as elementary arithmetic, English history and literature, gardening, photography, and reading and writing (for illiterates). These classes are conducted by paid elementary school teachers. They are, in fact and intention, very elementary indeed. New prisoners are attracted by the opportunity of getting out of their cells for an additional hour in the evening. Otherwise, these classes serve little useful purpose as far as the prisoner above the moron stage is concerned.

Although the prison authorities seem not to agree, I believe that the intelligence of most prisoners is fairly high. Yet the only class that caters for anyone of intelligence is "Musical Appreciation," at which the teacher plays and comments on records of classical music. This class is always full and many are turned away.

Perhaps it was my experience with the library and prison education that made me realize, quite suddenly, that the word by which I had been seeking to sum up Wormwood Scrubs was "waste." In prison language we were "doing" time but most of us were in fact wasting it. We were also wasting large sums of the taxpayer's money. This waste—of time, of money, of human life—is a prime reason for the demoralization of prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs. How complete this is can be seen at exercise time. One morning I was confined to my cell with a cold. Looking out of the window I could see the exercise ground. "Good Lord!" I thought, "do I look like that, too?"

Prisoners were walking round singly, in twos or in threes—but slouching or shuffling would be a better word. Since there are no pockets in the trousers and it is forbidden to put one's hands in the jacket pockets, most men were walking with them clasped behind their backs. Bent slightly forward, they gave an impression of premature old age. The new men were easy to pick out. They were walking upright at a

faster pace and swinging their arms. The area of the exercise ground would be quite large but for a huge vegetable patch in the centre. This leaves only the outer area for exercise. Everybody moves in the same direction, counter-clockwise, except cripples and old men who go clockwise round an inner circle.

Inside the vegetable patch are criss-crossing paved paths for prisoners on "special watch." There were three or four of these during my time but there may be as many as twelve. Attempted suicides or escapees, they are segregated and kept under special observation. Huge black patches are sewn on their jackets and trousers. At night their cell lights are left on. Their clothes are left outside the cell door.

During exercise, all prisoners are watched carefully by warders standing in strategic positions, for it is here that pilfered food, illicit tobacco and smuggled razor-blades and newspapers change hands. Ever since a number of I.R.A. prisoners escaped when part of the wall near the exercise ground was blown up by colleagues on the other side in the early days of the war, special precautions have been taken to prevent a mass outbreak.

First Lessons In Prison Slang

At exercise the new prisoner makes friends and sometimes enemies, hears the prison news and gossip, and gets his first lesson in prison slang. Before long he is referring to the warders as "screws," to his cell as "peter," to his sentence as "bird" which he does in "nick."

It is during exercise, too, that the "poufs" or homosexuals become obvious. The most pathetic group of men in prison, they stick together, sometimes holding hands, the butt of crude jokes from both warders and fellow-prisoners. Such men are more numerous than the public seems to realize. Their offence places them in a different category from other prisoners. Generally speaking, they are extremely intelligent and, in the usual sense of the term, not criminals at all. Apart from their deep resentment at being sentenced for an act which they cannot think wrong, they are model prisoners.

There were several dozens of them in Wormwood Scrubs, most serving comparatively long sentences. Not all of them had been sentenced as such, but had been charged with breaking probation, drunkenness, speeding and other offences when homosexuality, though suspected, was not obvious enough to obtain a conviction. They included university professors and undergraduates, high-ranking Army officers, schoolmasters, clergymen, P.T. instructors, musicians, artists and hairdressers. Most were men in their late twenties, thirties and early forties. Since they had their "friends" and when convicted were not involved with younger men or boys, they had, in their opinion, done no harm.

Friendship That Led To Jail

Typical of these was a scientist who had previously worked in a Government laboratory. He was about forty-five and very intelligent. He had been friendly with a younger man employed at the same laboratory and shared a flat with him. Neither had the slightest interest in women nor had interfered with young men or boys. Theirs, they considered, was an ideal friendship. For some reason, the police became interested in them. They were quite frank about their relationship, as they did not believe they were doing anything wrong. Both were sentenced to eighteen months.

The older homosexuals in prison, however, were mainly those who were in constant contact with young men and boys through their professions. A surprisingly large number of these were married, with grown-up families.

The waste of time, money and energy applies to warders as well as prisoners. For instance, I wanted to grow a beard. It was impossible to shave properly with the blades provided and, since I had seen other prisoners with beards, I decided that I would grow one, too. I stopped shaving. Three days later I was bawled out by a Principal Officer, one of the few who revelled in charging men for small breaches of the rules.

After five minutes, during which he threatened me with every punishment from bread and water to loss of remission, he told me that I needed the Governor's permission to grow a beard. Before I could apply, I had to shave off the present growth. I did this and applied to the appropriate officer for an interview with the Governor. This was entered in a little book.

The following day, half way through the morning's work, I was called to see the Governor. With other applicants, I was lined up in the hall while a P.O. and two officers checked our names against a register at least four times. Although this was during working hours when we should have been justifying our cost to the country,

Where the author lived for months: the cells at Wormwood Scrubs. Wartime picture taken when this part of the jail was used as offices

we then had to wait three-quarters of an hour.

A surprising incident occurred. Although there were only about twenty of us, the P.O. and one of the officers could not make their figures tally. Eventually the officer threw his pile of folders on the floor and announced that he was "fed up." The P.O. was undisturbed. "So am I," he grunted. They collected up the papers and started again.

About ten minutes from the end of the morning working period, the second warder made frantic signals from the grilled gate at the entrance to the hall where he was standing. On seeing him, the P.O. vanished into the office where the Governor was to hear our applications, while the other warder counted us yet again, checked names and numbers, reshuffled us and barked out orders which were unintelligible.

A few seconds later the Governor, escorted by the Chief Officer, marched through the unlocked gate and entered the office. One by one we were called in. The Governor was sitting at the office table, a ledger in front of him, a pen in his hand. Behind him on one side stood the Chief Officer and, nearby, one of the warders. The other warder ("fed up") stood within easy reach in case I decided to attack the Governor. "State your name and number," ordered the P.O. I did so.

After glancing at my file, the Governor looked up. "Yes, what do you want?"

"I would like your permission to grow a beard, sir." Laboriously, he wrote this down under my name in the ledger. "Why?" he asked.

I explained to him as politely as I could what I thought of the prison razor-blades.

"Very well," he said, and entered that, too, in his ledger. The P.O. opened the door and I was through it just thirty seconds after I had entered.

This procedure is standard if you want permission to send an extra letter, receive magazines, change your job or have an additional visit. You waste most of your morning working time; another prisoner, the leader, spends most of his morning collecting the applicants from their workshops; a P.O. and two warders spend nearly an hour counting and re-counting, shuffling and re-shuffling the line; the Governor and Chief Officer are taken off whatever more important work they have to do. The total of staff salaries wasted in this way—not to mention the time off mailbags—must be considerable.

A "Snout" Can Put Things Right

A second example of waste was even more astounding. One morning I was having my weekly bath. Half-way through, my change of clothing was draped over the door in the usual manner. It is always a great adventure to get a change, as you never know until you try it on whether it will fit you. This time, everything was in order except the socks. They were much too small.

This is not unusual and can be rectified by the usual "snout" (rolled cigarette). I called over the attendant and asked him to make the change. I was not the only one. Every single man in the bath-house was shouting for different socks. The attendants, the leader, the two officers on duty were in a quandary. Every single pair of socks sent from the stores that morning was useless. They would scarcely have fitted a five-year-old.

Waste of time and waste of money are well epitomized in the labour system of Wormwood Scrubs. The mailbag shop is as good an example as any. It employs more prisoners than any other workshop. Of the hundred men who work there, about seventy are on machines and certainly earn their keep. The other thirty probably waste more material each week than is made up on ten machines. The thirty, all on hand-sewing, are newcomers to the job. They are given two sheets of cloth, a needle, and waxed thread and told to make a mailbag. True, a prisoner is appointed instructor but it is obviously impossible for him to attend to everyone at once. The newcomers especially are afraid of drawing attention to themselves by asking whether they are doing the work correctly or not. So the waste goes on.

Struggle To Complete The Quota

Again, each man is told he is expected to sew a minimum of six mailbags a week. He struggles to complete his quota, regardless of whether his work is good or bad. In this way more than 100 mailbags are spoiled each week. I know, because it was my job with two or three others to undo the spoiled bags and remake them. By the time a man *has* learned to sew correctly, a vacancy has almost certainly arisen on a machine and he is transferred. His place is taken by another tyro who wastes yet more cloth.

Perhaps the biggest wastage of all is in the kitchen. Food is prepared for the exact number of prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs each day. Some do not eat morning porridge; others do not like fish or the way it is cooked, the potatoes or other items of food. That does not matter. Prison rules lay down that every man must be served with a given weight of porridge, bread and other foods, whether he wants it or not. The food is always unappetizing and often tasteless. The amount that finds its way down the nearest sink each day would keep a pig-farm going.

NEXT WEEK: My life in one of the new prisons without bars

"We know the best shops and the interesting places to eat." Mrs. Sewell starts a London tour

Welcome, stranger!

by DON EVERITT

Whether he wants to look in on Parliament or just go on a pub crawl, the Pilot Friends are at the tourist's service

A DEJECTED SOUTH AFRICAN arrived in London, having abandoned a Continental holiday through language difficulties. Though he had never been to Britain before, he did not like the British. Originally, he had intended to devote only two days of his two-month holiday to the London sights. Now he had seven weeks to spare. In desperation he called at a Regent Street information bureau for suggestions. The clerk sent him to see Mrs. Eve Sewell at an address in Buckingham Gate.

From then on the South African never had a dull moment. The very next day he began a series of social engagements—all arranged at the last minute. He saw the Trooping the Colour ceremony from a front-row seat (although officially accommodation was booked up); he was introduced to the Duchess of Kent at the Antique Dealers' Fair; he attended a sitting of the House of Commons (again officially "full"); he went to a race meeting in hired topper and tails and lunched at the exclusive Cavalry Club.

Permission was obtained for him to see parts of St. James's Palace and the Tower of London that are not normally open to the public. A student took him round Cambridge, a ballet dancer took him to the ballet, and someone equally suited to the occasion took him on a London pub crawl. In all, eight people escorted him in and around London every night and most days for more than a week. By that time the rest of his holiday had been arranged: a car tour of the south-west with an English family.

Curiously, the total charge for making all these arrangements and for the escorts' services was only five guineas. But Eve Sewell and the escorts themselves—all members of an organization called Pilot Friends—were well satisfied. Their real reward came when, on his return to London, the South African admitted that his opinions about the British had been reversed.

Pilot Friends is a semi-voluntary group formed earlier this year to promote friendship between Britain and the rest of the world by giving service to tourists and business visitors from overseas. Oddly enough, its sponsors are the London branch of an American women's organization, Pilot International; odder still, the president, dark-haired, forty-six year old Mrs. Sewell, who organized this friendship-with-Britain service, is its only American member.

"We decided to form Pilot Friends," says Mrs. Sewell, "when we heard that more and more tourists were not content with just doing the sights with a guide book in one hand and a pair of binoculars in the other."

There are some fifty Pilot Friends, "all carefully selected men and women of proved integrity, tact and resourcefulness." The code of conduct which they have signed fills two sides of a foolscap sheet and has been tightened still further since one member was found to be accepting commissions from shops and restaurants. Most of the Pilot Friends are bi-lingual and are experts in at least two or three subjects —"from fishing to ancient architecture." All have a wide knowledge of London. Says Mrs. Sewell: "We claim to know the best shops, particularly the least expensive ones, the antique dealers where prices aren't exorbitant, and the most interesting places to eat."

Mrs. Sewell and her colleagues arrange visits to unusual places of interest not covered by travel guides. Tourists have been taken backstage at famous London theatres and at television shows. For one visitor a meeting with Jacob Epstein was arranged.

Filling In The Family Tree

Another Pilot Friend service is the tracing of ancestors. One member recently spent nearly a week with an American in Somerset, reading gravestones and questioning villagers. They found the graves of three of his forebears and actually met some of his distant relatives.

Since the South African's visit Mrs. Sewell has had to revise the escort charges. They range now from thirty shillings for a morning or afternoon to five guineas for a weekend, but they can be modified according to the visitor's means. Twenty-five per cent of the fees is divided between the organization's expenses and Pilot International's charity, a fund for a home for impoverished women; the rest goes to the escorts. The visitors also pay the escort's expenses.

The Pilot Friend service is used by all types and ages and, occasionally, it can be quite a fatiguing job, as one young woman knows only too well. One day she had to take charge of two American boys, aged eleven and thirteen, whose mother thought that a tour of London would have great educational value. The escort picked them up at a fashionable hotel. As soon as they were out of mother's hearing, they said to her: "Look, we didn't bargain for a dame, but if you're good you can string along. Now, first, where can we get something to eat?"

"But surely you've just had breakfast?"

"Aw, sis, you don't call that breakfast——"

Soon, over a huge meal, the boys were passing comments about the shapeliness of the English waitresses. When it came to paying the bill, one of them waved the escort's hand away, produced a roll of notes, peeled one off and told the waitress to keep the change. They spent the rest of the morning in an amusement arcade. Then, having lunched at an expensive hotel, they were persuaded to go to Hampton Court Palace. But by the time they arrived their interest in history had waned. They took a boat on the river. Subsequently, they got into a fight with two other boys, overturning their boat.

SOS From The Escort

Only once has a Pilot Friend deserted her charge. Some weeks ago a middle-aged visitor from across the Atlantic phoned Mrs. Sewell, asking if two escorts, preferably mother and daughter, could accompany him on a car tour of Scotland. He explained that he wanted to re-create the atmosphere of previous holidays. "My wife died recently," he said, "and my daughter got married some months ago."

Unfortunately, a mother-daughter combination was not available, but one of the Pilot Friends, a woman in her twenties, agreed to go with him. Three days later Mrs. Sewell had a trunk call. It was the escort, and she was highly agitated. Apparently, as soon as they had crossed the Border the change of scenery or something had done things to her companion. "He no longer wants me as a stand-in for his daughter," she cried. "What shall I do?"

Mrs. Sewell said quickly: "Say you've had a terrible attack of toothache. Then pack and come straight back." The Pilot Friends' motto is, "There is no need to feel a stranger in a strange country"; but this, Eve Sewell felt, was taking their invitation too far. THE END

It's a Woman's Privilege to Change Her Mind!
BUT, MARGIE, THERE MUST BE SOME REASON FOR ALWAYS CHANGING YOUR MIND ABOUT ME.
YOU'D CHANGE YOUR MIND IF SOMEONE YOU LIKED HAD...BAD BREATH. PLEASE DO SEE YOUR DENTIST
SCIENTIFIC TESTS PROVE THAT, IN 7 CASES OUT OF 10, COLGATE'S REMOVES THE CAUSE OF BAD BREATH. IT ALSO HELPS STOP TOOTH DECAY.
FOR COLGATE'S ACTIVE, PENETRATING FOAM GETS INTO HIDDEN CREVICES WHERE DECAY BEGINS, CLEANS ENAMEL BRILLIANTLY – SAFELY, TOO.
LATER - THANKS TO COLGATE DENTAL CREAM
Clean Your Breath While You Clean Your Teeth – AND HELP STOP TOOTH DECAY
COLGATE RIBBON DENTAL CREAM
1'4 also Giant Size 2'-
JB

I LIVED WITH THE MALAY BANDITS

Continued from page 9

the estate, firing broke out among the rubber trees. I stepped on the accelerator, skidded round the next bend and went flat out for the police station.

We did not learn how narrow our escape had been until half an hour later, when I arrived at the tail end of a procession of Malayan Flying Squad cars to help with the mopping-up operations. By that time the bandits had gone. The acting manager and I made our way down to the garage and opened the doors. There, on the concrete floor, lay his chauffeur, in a pool of blood. He was dead. One of the servants came forward to tell us what had happened. A knock on the door had aroused the chauffeur from a doze. He had asked what was the matter. "Open up," the bandits had replied. "The *tuan* (master) wants the car." They shot him as he opened the door.

After that, things became progressively worse. In August of last year, when due for leave, I was asked to go as acting manager to one of the toughest districts of all. The estate covered some 2,500 acres, with a labour force of about 300. It is in deep jungle country, isolated and unfriendly, a perennial breeding ground for terrorists.

A company of the Devon Regiment was stationed in an old Chinese schoolhouse nearby, but, game as they were, they found their operations restricted by the nature of the territory. The biggest drawback was the thousands of Chinese squatters that infested the area, providing the guerrillas with just the ready-made feeding and refuelling depots that they needed. In the early stages of the campaign, the Army had taken a strong line with native villages known to be helping the enemy, often razing them to the ground. Now they began to realize that for the squatters it was often Hobson's choice. One squatter put it to me this way: "If we give information and the Communists hear about it we are killed outright. If we hold back information, the police arrest us, put us in a detention camp and feed and clothe us. We prefer to live."

No One Can Be Trusted

On most estates there are Communist-paid agents, but it is rarely known who they are until it is too late. One of my *kathalas* (foremen), for instance, a grizzled old boy, disappeared one day without trace. I had always considered him trustworthy enough, but shortly afterwards, the Gurkhas unearthed an abandoned guerrilla camp. Among the personal belongings left behind was a chit I had handed to him shortly before he disappeared.

Life became the nearest thing to total war that I, as a civilian, had ever known. The estate buildings were surrounded by an apron fencing of five-strand barbed wire, with strong-points constructed out of old railway sleepers, and searchlights placed 100 feet apart. Our guard strength now totalled thirty. Once the only things that stood by my bedside were books by my favourite authors—Bates, Cronin, Peter Cheyney. Now they were supplemented with a Sten and a Browning automatic plus a few grenades lying handy on a shelf above my head.

Payday, once the first of every month, now might take place any time between the first and the seventh. To draw the pay I had to go to the Treasury Office taking armed guards with me. No one knew in advance which day I would choose. To have kept to a schedule would have invited an ambush.

One night, trouble struck right on our own doorstep. My assistant, a keen wild-pig hunter, was scouting for pig among the rubber trees, close to the swamp, when he heard a faint whistle. At first he thought that the constable with him had spotted the quarry and whistled back, but the constable, standing some fifty yards away, had seen what he had missed —a young man in a khaki uniform, with a red star on his cap, crouching in the shadows of a rubber tree. The constable fired, and almost in the same instant the bandit fired back.

Chase Through The Swamp

As soon as my assistant felt the bullet *whang* past his face, he returned fire and saw his man drop. Simultaneously, half a dozen other bandits who had been skulking nearby splashed away into the swamp at a run. He chased them for a short distance, fired again, wounded another, and then started back. He reached his first "bag" when he saw that the bandit's hand was tight-clenched over something, and that he was heaving convulsively as he tried to struggle upright. This time my friend fired to kill. Coming forward, he gingerly removed the grenade from the bandit's hand.

It was evident that the fellow had been a messenger of some kind, for his pack was crammed full, not only of crudely printed pictures of Stalin and Lenin, but of short curtly worded notes in Chinese from section leaders to party members — all addressed by code names.

That was the way things were when I left Malaya recently at the beginning of my leave. Since then things may have slowly improved—from the planter's viewpoint, all too slowly. The Chinese squatters, once a valuable if unwilling source of food supplies for the guerrillas, are being rounded up and segregated into camps. In some areas, armoured cars are being used. At last the authorities seem to have realized that this is not merely a localized danger, with bandits conducting haphazard "nuisance raids" when and where they please. It is an organized and carefully planned war, sometimes "cold," sometimes "hot."

Soon I shall be travelling back to my estate—this time, preferably, by car. I have lately become allergic to trains.

THE END

BRITAIN'S ATOMIC STORY

What goes on inside the strange new factories where white-coated keymen work round the clock to speed our progress in atomic power? Is any use already being made of radio-active products? How long will it be before the atom is harnessed to the home?

These are some of the questions JOHN BULL asked Harry Hopkins to answer. His three-part survey begins in . . .

JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

HERO'S REWARD

Continued from page 7

and Joe had talked it over and resigned themselves to the fact that Jimmy would have to go through life cross-eyed. The only way to make it lighter for the poor kid was to pretend they never noticed it.

"Just doing my hair," he said, and picked up a comb. He disturbed the curls that lay on his head like a tangle of new wood shavings, then put the comb back in the toilet cabinet. "I'm going out to play with the kids."

"Anything special on this morning?" Mary Stevens said. "How about staying in one Saturday morning and cleaning the windows?"

"What you want to clean the windows for?" He followed his mother out to the kitchen. "The rain'll clean 'em."

"The rain dirties them. It smears them."

"Then what's the good? It'll rain tomorrow, or the next day. It always rains sooner or later."

"We won't have any arguments," Mary Stevens said, and slapped at him as he picked at one of the cakes she had just taken from the oven. "Next Saturday morning, you'll clean the windows. Now buzz off. And be back at one o'clock for lunch. Your dad's going over to Manoora to watch the cricket."

"I'll ask him can I go, too," he said, then grinned at her. "I still gotta wash the windows next Sat'day?"

"Yes," Mary Stevens said, and threw him a cake. "So make the most of today's fishing."

JIMMY went out of the house into the bright morning. The wattle trees clung to the side of the house like melting sunlight, and cicadas whittled the still, heavy air into a brittle pattern of sound. It was going to be a great day, all right.

He'd go out with his father this afternoon. Dad was a good sport and always knew the sort of things a bloke liked. Dad had bought him this fishing rod last Christmas, a better rod than any of the other kids had, even though his dad didn't make as much money as the other kids' fathers did. Then there was that time they'd gone down to Sydney to see the cricket Test between Australia and England; none of the other kids in town had seen a Test. Yeah, dad was all right, sort of good to belong to.

The kids were facing him, standing at Jackson's Corner and staring at him as if there were something wrong with him.

"Hallo," he said. "You blokes all ready?"

Georgie Vernon was standing just slightly in front of the five other boys. "You ain't coming, Squinty."

"What you mean?" He had felt something was wrong as soon as he had looked at the kids' faces. Georgie Vernon was boss of the mob and was always trying to push him around. Vernon was the biggest and eldest of the kids, thirteen last birthday, and his old man was the town's chemist. "I got my rod and stuff——"

"Well, take it somewhere else," Georgie Vernon said. "You ain't coming with us."

"Ah, let him come." Dickie Lawrence was the closest to a real cobber that he had, but he knew that Dickie was too weak to stand up to the gang for long. "He'll be all right."

"I tell you, he ain't coming," Georgie Vernon said. "Anyone with squint eyes always gives you bad luck. Look at last time we went fishing. He was with us, and we didn't even get a bite. Squinty ain't coming. That's all there is to it."

But that wasn't all there was to it. He couldn't find the words, but he knew there was more to it than that. There was pain and sadness and a terrible bleak loneliness, but he knew none of the words for what he felt, and he turned away in silence and went down the street, walking blindly through sunshine that he couldn't feel, walking blindly through tears that now hid the awful squint.

At last he found himself by the river, but well downstream from where the other kids would be fishing. They always went to the same spot, at the bottom of Casey's big paddock, and no one, not even the men, ever came this far downstream to fish.

Well, *he'd* fish here. Here he could be alone, and even if he didn't catch any fish it wouldn't matter. He would always come down here from now on, and the kids and the town and even the whole world could go to Halifax.

He baited his hook and cast the line. It sailed out, curving in the air, then dropped and caught beneath the surface. A snag, darn it. The river was full of snags and they always had to be careful when they went swimming that they didn't gash themselves on the submerged logs and branches. He jerked the line, but nothing happened. Finally, there was nothing for it but to strip off and go in and free the line.

The river was flowing swiftly today, full from yesterday's rains in the hills, and it took him all his time to stay level with the spot where the line was caught. He trod carefully through the mud near the bank, holding himself at an angle against the current, then abruptly kicked off and swam slowly but strongly towards where he had seen the line first strike the water. He felt the line brush against him and he grabbed it. Then he followed it down, taking a deep breath and going under water, and in a few moments the line was free and he was back on the surface again.

But he had been swept downstream a few yards, and he had to swim strongly for the bank. He climbed out, dried himself on the tail of his shirt, hung the shirt over a bush to dry in the strong sun, and put on his shorts. He rebaited the hook, aimed carefully and cast, and sat down against a stump.

Below him the river went swiftly by, a bright glare under the high sun. He watched it reflectively.

HE'D leave here, that was what he'd do. Never mind about coming down here to this spot to fish. He'd go away down to Sydney, maybe even farther than that, to New York or London or Tibet. He'd be a pilot—no, he couldn't be a pilot: they wouldn't give him a licence with his eye like this. Well, he'd be an engineer, or a lawyer, an architect, something. Anything to get away from here.

He might even be an explorer. Yes, that was it. He'd be an explorer, go to Tibet and the jungles of the Amazon and the icy stretches of the South Pole where the blizzard swept down from the tundra. Or was it the North Pole? Well, anyway. He'd be Sir Jimmy—no, Sir James Stevens, the famous explorer. And people would remember him and be proud of him. Jimmy Stevens, they'd say; yeah, he was born and reared right here in this town.

He sat in a wonderful silence; his

WHEN MEN WERE MEN
AND WOMEN WERE WOMEN

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eyes full of the golden light of the day and the inarticulate excitement of a dream that *might* come true. Then the line jerked and the dream was gone.

It was a perch, shining and alive, at the end of his line, and in the next half hour he caught two more. Happiness shone in his face like the reflected brightness of the river: he'd show the blokes, and especially that skite Vernon. . . .

The kids were just scrambling up the steep bank on to the track when he met them.

"You catch any?" he asked.

"Nah," Dickie Lawrence said, and waved a disgusted hand. "Did you?"

He brought the fish round in front of him with a flourish, like a magician producing rabbits from a hat. "Three of 'em! Big 'uns, too."

"Who give 'em to you?" Georgie Vernon said.

"No one," he said. "I caught 'em myself. About half a mile down from here."

"What'd I tell you?" Dickie Lawrence said. "He ain't such bad luck."

"Not for himself, he ain't," Georgie Vernon said. "But he is for other people. All cockeyed people are bad luck."

Suddenly hate quivered in him like a lightning bolt.

"Shut your gob, Vernon," he said, and the bright sunlit world spun away in a mist of trembling anger. "Shut your gob or I'll bash you!"

"You couldn't see straight enough to hit me," Georgie Vernon said, and yelled as the fish came up in a flashing arc to hit him on the side of the head.

"Go it, Squinty!" Dickie Lawrence shouted.

"Murder him, Georgie!"

Wild fists ripped patches out of the air, but occasionally a blow landed and then there would be a yell from the other boys. The fighters grunted and panted, but it was anybody's fight. Jimmy couldn't see for tears of anger, but he was going to bash Vernon before he left here. He swung a fist, feeling it strike into Vernon's cheek, then there was a shout and a splash.

"He's in the river!" someone yelled.

"Quick, grab him!"

"I can't!" said Dickie Lawrence, and his voice was full of panic and terror. "The river's too fast!"

JIMMY blinked, wiping away the tears with the back of his hand, and saw Georgie Vernon out in the middle of the river. Vernon was struggling against the current, white-faced and too afraid even to cry out, his arms beating madly as the river carried him farther and farther away from the frightened, shouting boys on the bank.

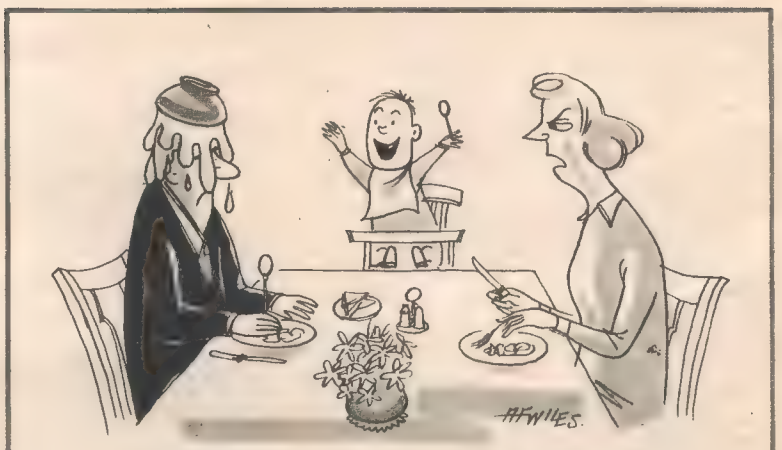
"He'll drown!" Dickie Lawrence was almost crying. "He can't swim that good."

Vernon disappeared for a moment beneath the surface.

"He's gone!"

Jimmy Stevens left the bank without thinking. His body flattened out for the dive even as he was running and he went out towards the swift, shining river in the best dive he had ever made. His mind only started functioning again just before he hit the water.

He sliced through the shining upper water and came to a blinding, shattering stop against the hidden snag. Pain burst in his face, and he went down in a twisting, writhing bundle to the bottom of the river. Feeling already dead, but carrying the pain with him, he kicked and



"I asked you to feed him—not play with him"

rose towards the surface. He could see nothing and remember nothing, but suddenly his hands closed on a struggling something and he hung on. He kicked wildly, then something hard smacked against his ribs, pulling him up sharply, and someone began to cough violently in his ear.

Then he went down into the deep blackness of the river, and everything was gone. . . .

HE came back out of the black river twice, before he came up for the final time. But even then it was night and black, and, full of fear, he put his hands up to his eyes. Then he lay back and tried to remember. He had dived into the river and must have hit a snag; he had woken for a moment in something that had been moving, a car or an ambulance; he had woken again here in bed (it wasn't his own bed, it was too hard, and the room sounded bigger than his room at home) and now here he was awake for the third time and there were thick bandages round his eyes.

"Hallo, Jimmy," a woman's voice said. "How do you feel?"

He put a hesitant hand up to the bandages. "Pretty crook. My eyes hurt."

"They will for a while," the woman said. She made a stiff starchy sound as she moved, and she smelled like carbolic soap. "Would you like to see your mother? I'll bring her in."

She rustled as she went away, then a man's voice said: "How are you, son?"

He turned his head, searching for the voice. "All right. Where am I?"

"Sydney Hospital," the man said. "This is the casualty ward."

Sydney! Then he heard his mother coming: he recognized her footsteps, and he put out his hand. He felt her hold it to her cheek, which was wet.

"Oh, Jimmy!"

"Hallo, Mum," he said, and put his free hand up to the bandages. "What's the matter with my eyes?"

His mother was crying. He knew that, but he said nothing because he could think of nothing to say; there was always something strange about grown-ups crying.

His mother blew her nose. "They had to operate on them, Jimmy. You were hurt pretty bad when they got you out of the river."

He suddenly remembered. "How's Georgie Vernon? Was he . . . did he. . . ?"

"No," his mother said, and she squeezed his hand. "You saved him. You were swept into a tree that had fallen into the river, and the other boys fished you out from there. Then Dickie Lawrence ran all the way home to get your father. Dad got Dr. Wolfe and the ambulance and they brought you down here to Sydney."

"Where's dad now?"

"Here, Jim," he heard his father say, and he reached out blindly.

"Dad," he said, but all he felt was the rough bearded chin.

His mother and father left after a while and he lay back and thought about what they had told him.

So he was a hero. But it wouldn't make much difference. People would still think of him as Squinty Stevens, the cockeyed kid from Wonga Street. The other kids might want him to play with them, but he'd turn 'em down. He was still going away, whether he was a hero or not. If the kids wouldn't have him before he became a hero, then they weren't worth bothering about.

Next morning the kids came to see him.

"George's old man drove us down," Dickie Lawrence said. "How you feeling?"

"All right." He could feel them standing about his bed in an awkward silence, but he wasn't going to help them.

"How're your eyes?" someone said.

"Shut up, you mug," he heard Dickie Lawrence whisper. "Don't ask him that."

"They're all right," he said. "They're gonna take the bandages off this morning."

There was another long silence, then Georgie Vernon said: "Jimmy?"

"Yeah?" He wasn't going to help him, least of all.

"I—er—thanks for getting me outa the river," Georgie said. "I'd have drowned, if you——"

"You were a blinking hero," Dickie Lawrence said.

"It was just tough about that snag getting in the way," someone else said.

"Yeah, that was the tough part," Georgie said. "Anyhow, Jimmy, thanks. I dunno how to say it. . . ."

EVEN if he'd wanted to, he couldn't have helped Georgie Vernon right then. He opened his mouth, but he knew he had nothing to say. He put up his hand, then limply let it drop. It was sort of tough, being a hero.

"We brought some things for you," one of the kids said. "Fruit and cake and things."

The voices buzzed on about him, and then he heard the doctor speaking. "Righto, fellers. Outside for a while. We're going to take the bandages off his eyes."

The kids went away, then he felt the doctor sit on the edge of the bed. "Jimmy, I've got something to tell you. How brave are you?"

"I dunno," he said.

"Well, you must be all right, otherwise you wouldn't have saved that other boy. But this will take a different sort of courage." The doctor was silent for a moment, then he said: "Jimmy, when I take these bandages off we may find that you're blind."

He lay for one awful moment, feeling colder than he had ever felt in his life before. He looked at the blackness before his eyes and tried to remember the world beyond. But his mind was suddenly dead and he might just as well have tried to remember the world before he was born. He lay trying to think, trying to remember, but everything was black, and finally all he could do was whisper: "Righto, doctor. Take 'em off."

THEY seemed to take all the time in the world. There was a nurse on one side of him and the doctor on the other, and he could hear the ticking of the doctor's watch going round and round his head as the bandages were unrolled. He kept his eyes closed as the pressure of the bandages got lighter and lighter. His tongue was between his teeth and he was biting it without feeling it.

"This is the last bandage, Jimmy," the doctor said. "Don't try to move your eyes. There are stitches in the corners. We have to wash off some of the mess."

Then the last bandage was gone. His eyes were still shut, but the blackness seemed to have lightened. Then something wet was brushed gently against his lids. The brushing went on, ever so gently, while he bit his tongue and screwed the sheet in his tightly clenched hands. Then the brushing had finished, and all of a sudden he felt the stillness about him. The whole ward was waiting on him.

"Righto, Jimmy," the doctor said. "Open your eyes and look at me."

He opened his eyes slowly, carefully, aware of the tightness of the stitches in the corners of the right eye. Everything was a blur, like looking through water, then things became clearer.

"You see me, Jimmy?" the doctor said from the foot of the bed.

His teeth let go his tongue. "Yeah, doctor! I can see you! I can see!"

Then they were washing his eyes again, and then the doctor sat back on the bed. He had to turn his head, careful of his eyes, to look at the doctor.

"Jimmy, you've got a pretty nasty scar running from your forehead, down between your eyes to the top of your cheek." The doctor was holding a mirror. "You're going to get a bit of a shock, but just remember, it won't always look like this. It'll clear up, and someday all you'll have will be a thin line to remind you of the brave thing you did."

The doctor held up the mirror, and he looked in it. He stared for almost a full minute, then he lifted his head and looked at the doctor.

"Doctor," he said, and his voice was trembling. "You. . . ."

"Yes, Jimmy." The doctor was a young man with a rare and wonderful understanding of the fears and sadness of one's time; he looked down the corridor of years to his own boyhood and remembered clearly how much certain things could mean. "We straightened your crossed eye, too." THE END

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SECRET OF THE BLACK BRAE

Continued from page 14

was never less than three feet of cover between the top of the bank and the surface of the water. He had no difficulty in feeling his way under the rocky walls of the Black Brae. As he crept on hands and knees along the edge of the rough water below the pool, pressing into the clay bank, pitted with rabbit holes, and guarding himself from slipping off the soft earth into the scummy holes on the edges of the river, his only fear was that the watchful herring gulls and the oyster catchers perched on the exposed rocks of the river-bed would sound the alarm. If the seabirds rose in a squawking and protesting crowd over his head, he could scarcely hope that the watcher on the hill would fail to notice it.

He cursed a moorhen which burst out of the rushes within a few inches of his nose and skimmed noisily across the river to the other bank. He froze in his tracks when a pair of mallard broke out of the rushes in front of him and, with a startled quack of alarm, circled over his head. But the warning didn't arouse the other creatures of the river. He calculated that he had achieved the first dangerous part of his stalk without revealing his presence to the watcher on the hill above.

ROBERT was pleased with himself. Mr. Cork might have no use for his brains but, when it came to action, he could give the old boy his money's worth. If he made a success of this job, under the very eyes of the G.M., the Anchor could hardly fail to give him a decent rise and, with any luck, promotion, too. He might even stick in insurance after all. If this was typical of the sort of thing that was going on behind the scenes, Robert felt that he had indeed discovered his vocation.

What a smashing girl, too! Pity that she was besotted by this fellow Daggers. But perhaps she'd change her mind when he himself had got the measure of him. Daggers was obviously one of those commando types who, because they'd done a battle school course and lived on raw potatoes, thought they were the toughest boys in Army boots. When he shot a line, Anna, who only had the queens in the ballet for comparison, was probably impressed. But not Robert.

As he crawled round a curve under the bank, Robert realized that he faced the prospect of cold water. Between him and the point where the burn joined the main stream, the clay bank, under which he was crawling, crumbled away. A wide belt of shingle, exposed by the fall in the level of the river, separated him from the cover of the deep ravine in the rocks—the watercourse known as Baile an Or—by which he intended to make the climb up Cnoc Craggie. The open bank offered no protection from the glasses of the watcher on the hill. To conceal his approach, Robert realized that he had no alternative but to take to the river, keep his head down, and float quietly with the current.

A deep and narrow run—the very run where Colonel Johnson fought the great fish after the race up the Devil's Staircase—curled round the outer edge of the shingle towards the foot of the burn.

Robert, with a wary eye for the white water beyond it, rolled off the bank into the river.

Keeping his arms under the water and working his legs slowly, he moved downstream with the current. He thought to himself that the water was warmer than it had been in the Black Brae. But when he got to the bottom of the run and under the shelter of the high rocks of the burn, he realized that it was the protecting warmth of his clothes that had deceived him. Now he felt cold and uncomfortable, and even the memory of Anna left him strangely indifferent. He scrambled out of the river hurriedly. Shaking himself and squeezing the water out of his clothes, he tried to build up his circulation again by flogging his arms round his chest. And, in doing so, he almost ruined his chances.

Three or four gulls swung up from the river, screaming overhead. Blasting them, Robert lay still, and in a few moments they settled down to their preening and fishing. But it was a warning. Robert, blue with cold as he was, started the difficult journey up the ravine cautiously and slowly.

The sides of the burn on the upper slopes were conveniently lined with a rank growth of bracken. Robert monkeyed up the cleft in the rock and, with a feeling of relief, sneaked into the cover of the foliage.

But the relief was short-lasting. In the hot, thundery weather every frond of bracken was populated with clegs and flies. They closed on Robert's steaming body delightedly. Miserably wiping the flies off his face, hacking himself on the sharp stones lying along the edge of the burn, he climbed obstinately upwards till his breathing became heavy and tickling drops of sweat mingled with the damp of his clothes. He was three-quarters of the way up the hill, and he was tired. He decided that it was time to rest. He turned on his belly and, parting the bracken, peered down into the Black Brae.

Mr. Cork and Anna were doing their stuff. Outlined on the river bank below, and to the right, Robert could see them together fishing the pool just above the place where the fall tumbled into the drain hole of the Black Brae itself. With his sharp eyes Robert could even sight the splash of a salmon rising under the bank opposite them, probably the fish that Mr. Cork was casting to. But he wondered how much enthusiasm Mr. Cork was putting into the job. Or Anna. Especially Anna.

He thought to himself how slight and graceful she looked, standing there at Mr. Cork's side. He recalled, in shameless detail, the body she had revealed when she dived in beside him into the Black Brae. And he felt rather the better for it.

HE turned over, and went on with the last leg of his climb. As he neared the top, a breeze stirred. Heather replaced the bracken. The flies faded away. Forgetful of the physical effort he had made, unconscious of his damp clothes, Robert was gripped with the thrilling knowledge that he was within striking distance of his man. He estimated that he himself was now about a hundred feet above him. And, if the watcher was still there, his attention would be directed towards the river, not behind him.

Robert decided to take a chance. Getting to his feet and bending double, he made a rush to the top. On the far slope, he found a sheep track. There, in a concealing fold, he recovered his breath and started to stride out, pace by pace, a thousand yards. At a thousand paces he turned up the hill again, falling to ground as he reached the top. He crawled round a little while in search of an observation place. Then he raised his head slowly and spied out the ground. There was nobody in sight.

Disappointed, he slithered forward, foot by foot, searching the hollows and the shadows behind the rocks. Senses taut to every sound and movement, he stiffened at the warning call of an old cock grouse in the heather to the right. The birds were upwind of him and it was odd that they had got his scent so easily. Flattened to the ground, fingers

LIVING LANGUAGE

by George Beardmore

WHY WE SAY . . .

APPLE-PIE ORDER

WHEN French knights went out to combat they were armed *cap-à-pied*, or from head to foot. Anglicized the phrase became "cap-a-pie," and so, by corruption, "apple-pie," which has come to mean anything neatly set out and in perfect detail.

The "apple-pie bed" has nothing to do with the above. This originates from the French word *plié* (folded), because the bedsheets were so folded and tucked in that the victim couldn't get his legs down.

digging into the peat, he rolled his head to get a look on his flank. As he did so, the grouse burst out of the heather like shrapnel and, with a whirr of wings, drove straight towards him. It couldn't have been Robert who had alarmed them. It was someone else.

The covey jinked as the old birds were surprised by the white dial of Robert's face. Raising himself on his arms, he peered along the curve of the hill. Lying in a hollow, his field glasses dangling on a strap round his neck, was the man Robert had been stalking.

The two of them sighted each other while the length of a cricket pitch still divided them. The man in the hollow pulled out an ugly-looking bludgeon from his pocket and, springing to his feet, came for Robert. Robert himself took a deep breath and, getting on his toes like a runner awaiting the starter's gun, measured the distance. If the fellow wanted a scrap, he could have it. He waited until there was ten yards between them; then he rushed his man.

Robert weighed thirteen stone and he made a flying tackle at his opponent's legs with all the extra force of his charge. The cosh flew out of the man's hand and the two of them came down with a grunt on the stony ground. For a moment they lay there half-stunned. Then, together, they rolled and wrestled for an advantage. The man was powerful and Robert was tired after the exhausting climb up the hill. To win, he realized that he must make a more open fight of it. Raising his knees, he pushed out hard and threw himself out of the clinch. His opponent, far from making any attempt to stop him, rolled back, too, and raising himself, plunged his right hand into his coat.

The pistol was half-drawn before Robert appreciated his mistake. He pitched in again just in time to feel the explosion as the bullet passed over his head. He grabbed the man's wrist and forced the barrel of the smoking gun into the ground. Desperately he closed his teeth on his opponent's hand. The pistol exploded again. A fist came down heavily on the back of his neck and he felt sick. But, somehow, he managed to bend the gun arm behind his opponent's back. The pistol dropped out of the man's hand and, as he tried to free his arm, he gave a sudden turn of his body. Robert rolled over but, as he went on to his back, he straddled his legs round his opponent's trunk and threw all his weight into twisting himself on top again.

With a lurch, the two struggling figures spilt over on the steep slope of Cnoc Craggie. For twenty or thirty bruising, bumping yards they stuck together. Scraping on the rough heather, cutting themselves on the outcrop rocks, they fought drunkenly on. Then, with another lurching roll, they parted.

Robert's head hit a rock and for a few seconds he was knocked unconscious. He came to, feeling dazed and with a warm trickle of blood trailing down the side of his face. Then he saw his man reeling desperately down the hill far below him. He was slipping down himself.

He climbed to his feet, shook his head wearily, and started tumbling and falling down the hill after his opponent. Half a dozen times he slipped and fell as, bleary-eyed and light-headed, he misjudged his footing on the slippery pot-holed slope of the hill.

He kept on until his head cleared sufficiently to let him see that the chase was hopeless. He saw Anna and Mr. Cork running towards him from the river bank. He saw his opponent sliding madly down the final slope of the hill on to the road.

First, he shouted to Anna and Mr. Cork to keep out of the way. Then, sitting there on the hill, he wondered where on earth his man was heading for. Surely he didn't expect to get far on his feet. And, as the thought struck him, he saw the answer. The man was on the road now and heading straight for old Cork's car. Please God they hadn't left the ignition key in place.

Robert roused himself and started down the hill again. He saw the man throw open the door of the Bentley and jump in. The ignition key was there all right. He heard the roar of the engine as the man put his foot down hard on the accelerator. The car swung out of the bay and turned towards Edendale.

DOWN below, Mr. Cork and Anna gazed after it. Watching them, Robert felt a wave of utter misery. He had failed, hopelessly, completely.

He stood at a standstill as the Bentley gathered speed and weaved along the twisting road to the hairpin bend over the bridge that spanned the burn. He thought to himself, idly, that the driver seemed to be taking it unnecessarily fast. Then he saw that something was wrong. The silver car was reeling wildly across the road. It lurched over the verge towards the river, swung giddily for a moment on the edge of the burn below the bridge, and then, with a crash, nose-dived into the deep rock gutter where the burn joined the main stream.

Robert started to run again.

"Are you all right?" gasped Mr. Cork.

He and Anna scrambled over the turf parapet between the brackened slope of the river bank and the road at the same moment that Robert, bringing with him a shower of rubble, slipped down into the cutting where the car had been parked at the base of the hill.

"I'm all right, sir," panted Robert, running in the direction of the wreck. "Just a bang on the head. Sorry I

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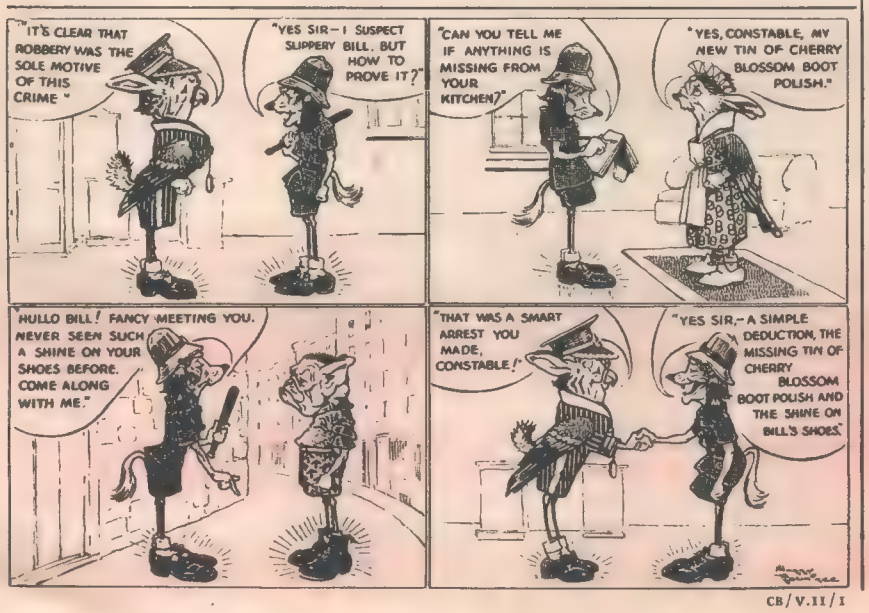
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"THAT WAS A SMART ARREST YOU MADE, CONSTABLE!"
"YES SIR,—A SIMPLE DEDUCTION, THE MISSING TIN OF CHERRY BLOSSOM BOOT POLISH AND THE SHINE ON BILL'S SHOES."

CB/V.11/1

made a blob of it. He was too good for me. Out of training, I'm afraid. Too much sitting at an office desk."

Robert shouted the last remark over his shoulder. Mr. Cork, with the handicap of his years, had come to a halt. Anna, in the hard training of a professional dancer, ran easily at his side.

"I suppose you heard the gun go off," he said to Anna. "He was armed."

Anna made no comment. They were trotting now, jolting through the bracken as they made a short cut to the gully below the road bridge where the burn joined the river.

"What do you think happened to the car?" said Anna.

"It looked to me as if the steering went wonky. Apart from that, he was driving damned fast." He stopped and looked at her. "Look here, you wait for old Cork and I'll go on and look."

She looked at him sombrely. "All right. Don't be long."

She watched him turn towards the wreck of the car, pushing his way through the bracken to the burn; the same burn which, a little while ago, he had negotiated during his stalk up the hill.

Standing on the side, Robert looked down the rocky cleft to the peaty trickle of water at the bottom of the gully, fifteen feet below. The Bentley, with its nose crushed into the bed of the stream, was lying there like a silver beetle, impotent on its back.

ROBERT climbed down the granite wall of rock. A glance was sufficient to confirm that his opponent was dead. The man who, only minutes before, had been so quick and muscular and wilful to live was twisted up in a grim heap. His eyes were still open in a horrified stare. Wax-faced, he was looking at Robert upside down.

Robert, accustomed in years of war to the sight of violent death, looked at the man carefully. He tried the doors of the car, but the framework was so twisted he could not move them. With an experienced eye, he looked at the base of the upturned chassis. Then he climbed up the bank again.

Mr. Cork was standing there with Anna. "Well?" he said.

"He's dead all right," murmured Robert casually. "He hadn't a hope. Somebody has interfered with the car."

"What?"

"The drop-arm of the steering has been sawn through with a hacksaw."

"Are you sure of that, Shipley?"

"Positive. The car is on its back and you can see the saw-marks where the drop-arm has been tampered with. By a jewel saw, I should think."

"What's a jewel saw?"

"A very fine-toothed saw used by precision engineers, metal-workers and such-like."

"By jewellers, too?"

"I suppose so. Anyhow, the chap who did this job was a good mechanic. He knew what he was up to, all right. He must have cut through about three-quarters of the tube on the leading-edge so that when the car made a sharp right-hand turn the control snapped. As soon as our chap picked up speed and spun the wheel at that hairpin bend over the bridge, he'd had it."

Mr. Cork pursed his lips between his fingers. Anna looked at Robert as if she was trying to make up her mind about something. "I must see him," she said suddenly. "I must see the man in that car."

"I shouldn't," said Robert. "He's not very pleasant to look at."

"Describe him, then."

"That's easy enough. He's fair-haired and tall, about my height, with blue eyes and several days' growth of beard."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. When you've looked at a man down the wrong end of a gun, it's remarkable how observant it makes you. But why do you ask? You're supposed to know the fellow."

"Not this man," said Anna quietly. "If your description is correct, it can't be Gabriel."

"How would you describe Daggers?"

"Gabriel was short, about five foot seven. He had black hair, and his eyes were. . . ."

"Never mind about his eyes," Robert interrupted. "I can tell you now that that poor devil down there in the burn isn't Daggers. Daggers might have changed the colour of his hair, and I might be wrong about the colour of his eyes. But he couldn't have put inches on his height. This fellow is a big chap. Didn't you see him tumbling down the slope?"

"We were too far away. We weren't even sure which of you was which."

THE three of them walked away from the tragic remains in the burn. They sat down together behind the grass bank on the edge of the road.

"I'm sorry about the car, sir," said Robert, tenderly dabbing his head with a wet handkerchief. "I'm afraid she's a write-off."

"Never mind the car," said Mr. Cork. "Just thank God we weren't in it."

"You think the steering was fixed for our benefit?"

"Who else could it have been for?"

"Snatcher must have done the job after we got rid of him. After all, we let him out of our sight as soon as I spotted the man on the hill."

"That's a possible explanation," said Mr. Cork doubtfully. "But who was this man on the hill? Why was he so interested in studying our movements? For what reason was he around? Why was he so anxious to get away that he stole the car? Obviously, he couldn't have known that the steering had been interfered with."

"Suppose Daggers fixed the car to get rid of you and me," suggested Robert, "in a convenient accident. And suppose the man on the hill was an accomplice of Kurt's. Perhaps they're friends of the man he murdered."

"That's what I thought," said Mr. Cork, "before I made Kurt's better acquaintance. But he doesn't strike me now as the sort of man to nurse a vendetta. There must be a more valid reason for his interest than that. Suppose that Kurt and his friends—we'll assume that the man on the hill was associated with Kurt—think that Daggers is dead; can you imagine any

THE HUMAN MACHINE

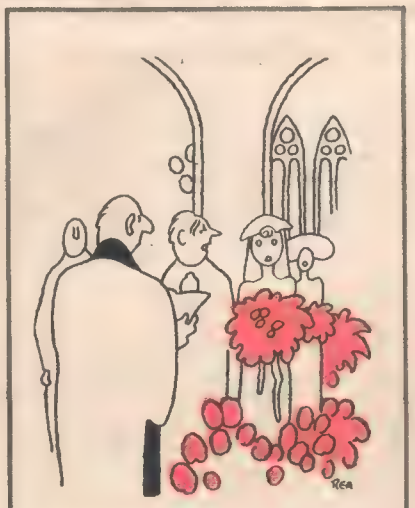
That little extra

AN American senator said recently that the surest way to survive is to do more than we have to do.

We should take those words to heart, for the surest way to failure in face of any situation is to do as little as we think will be adequate to meet it.

A safety margin is always needed to cope with the unforeseen. That little extra effort, that little bit more time spent in thought and preparation, may turn out not to have been necessary. *But*—it's better to be safe than sorry.

by ROFFE THOMPSON



"The man's asking you a question, darling"

secret that Daggers might have had, Anna, which they could believe had been passed to you?"

"No."

"What about Daggers's money?"

"I've told you I don't know where it came from."

"But these men might believe you do know."

He lit a cigarette with concentration.

"Well," said Robert, "what do we do next? I could do with a hot bath."

"We must walk to beat five down the river, where they'll be fishing, and get some help. Next, we must report this to the police. Are you feeling fit to move, Shipley?"

Robert got to his feet and shook his damp clothes. As Mr. Cork bestirred himself to follow, Robert checked him. "Wait a minute," he said, "there's somebody coming up the glen." He dropped down again quickly under the shelter of the grass bank.

"What sort of somebody?" said Mr. Cork.

"Somebody on a bicycle."

"A bicycle?"

"Why not?" said Anna.

"Yes, why not?" said Robert. "What on earth are we hiding for? It's probably a keeper or a shepherd. We can send him to get help."

Robert started into the road again.

"No, come back," said Mr. Cork quickly. "You may be quite right, Shipley. And it may be that I'm becoming excessively cautious. But I'm a nervous man by nature and, today of all days, in this place of all places, I'd like to make sure. We'll wait and see who this cyclist is before we show ourselves. How far away is he?"

"I saw him coming round a bend in the road about half a mile down river."

"Then he won't get here for a few minutes. Come along," said Mr. Cork. "We'll watch for him behind the bridge wall."

Mr. Cork, with his nose on the ground like an old dog on a hare, crawled heavily towards the bridge about fifty feet from where they had been sitting. Anna and Robert followed. On the sloping bank behind the bridge wall, Mr. Cork hauled himself from the ground and, with the other two crouching behind him, peered cautiously down the road.

They got into position just in time. The cyclist was pedalling rapidly along the curve of the road. And one glance was enough. As the three of them ducked into hiding again, Robert gave a low whistle.

"It's the Frenchwoman," he whispered, "wearing slacks."

"Twelve miles from base," said Mr. Cork, "riding a bicycle up the glen. I wondered how Madame Breuvart fitted in. Now, maybe, we shall find out."

They waited silently until they could hear the clicking of the chain as the cyclist free-wheeled up to the bridge before braking round the hairpin bend on the side where Mr. Cork, with Robert and Anna, was hiding. When she was safely past them, Mr. Cork peered up the road after her. She still pedalled on, but he noticed that she was looking about her as if she were searching for a landmark or a signal. As she arrived opposite the deserted croft on the hillside, she slowed down and dismounted.

"She seems to be quite sure where she wants to get to," said Robert.

"Somebody else with an interest in the Black Brae," said Mr. Cork. "As soon as she's out of sight of us, we'll walk down to the river and collect the rod we've left on the bank. Then we'll discover whether she's got as good an explanation for being at the Black Brae as we have."

The woman disappeared, as Mr. Cork had guessed she would, below the rock bank of the pool. Once again Mr. Cork, with Robert and Anna following, zigzagged along the sheep-tracks to the river. He walked slowly and thought hard. After a few moments he signalled to the couple behind him to move quietly. Then, choosing his way carefully through the undergrowth, he showed himself on the bank of the river at the tail of the Black Brae. It gave him a complete view through the high rocks on either side of the pool to the salmon leap at the mouth.

PEERING over the top of his glasses, Mr. Cork could not, at first, see the Frenchwoman at all. She was lying full length on her stomach, her left arm plunged into the river, almost up to her shoulder. She appeared to be fumbling about in the potholes and clefts in the rocks under the surface. She was so closely engaged that she failed to notice the figure of Mr. Cork standing on the bank about thirty yards below her.

He watched her for several minutes and then, beckoning Anna and Robert to follow, he circled round the outskirts of the pool to a point exactly opposite where the Frenchwoman was lying. He walked forward to the crown of the rock overlooking the river and, with his foot, deliberately toppled a pebble into the water by the side of the prostrate Madame Breuvart.

With a cry of alarm, the woman rolled on to her back and sighted the figure outlined on the rock above her. Before she had drawn her left hand completely out of the water, her right went to her breast and she levelled a pistol at Mr. Cork.

"Don't move!"

Mr. Cork eyed her imperturbably as she drew herself into a sitting position and got warily to her feet. As she watched him, she balanced the pistol with practised care against her stomach, the muzzle never wavering from its target. Mr. Cork reflected that she was probably highly efficient in everything she undertook: making love, cooking a dinner, or using an automatic pistol.

"What do you want?" she said.

"That's a question I might more properly ask you," said Mr. Cork. "For my part, I am fishing this beat on the river. What is your business, Madame Breuvart?"

"You know my name?"

"We are both of us residents in the Estuary Hotel. I happened to notice your name in the hotel register."

"Of course." She gave a wan smile of relief.

"Further, I had the pleasure of seeing you in the hotel dining-room last night. Now that I've explained myself, Madame Breuvart, will you please point that dangerous weapon in another

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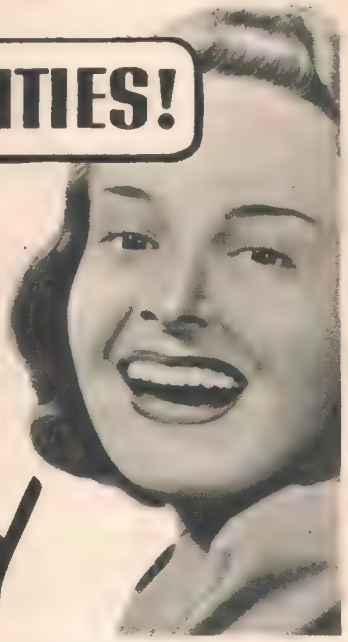

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JB

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It is a fact that rheumatism is most prevalent in changeable climates and rare in stable climates of extreme heat or cold. Yet it seems generally agreed that damp weather aggravates some forms of rheumatism; but so far there is no proof that dampness is an actual cause—or that rheumatism is caused by any outside influence at all. Indeed, modern research seems to suggest that the causes of rheumatism are to be found within the body.

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KRUSCHEN

direction. I assure you that, personally, I am quite harmless."

For a moment, she hesitated. Then she tucked back the pistol into what looked like a holster under her blouse. "I am sorry, monsieur. Unfortunately, I have many enemies."

"So it seems."

As Mr. Cork spoke, Robert, who had crept round behind the Frenchwoman, sneezed, the consequence of several hours in wet clothes. At once, she jerked the pistol out again and swung round.

"Allow me to introduce my friends," said Mr. Cork. "This lady is Miss Anna Pryde. The gentleman is Mr. Robert Shipley, and my name is Cork, Montague Cork. We've told you that what we're doing here is fishing," Mr. Cork went on. "Will you think it impertinent of me if I ask you a question?"

Madame Breuvart did not answer.

Mr. Cork said casually: "Was Gabriel Daggers a friend of yours?"

"Daggers a friend of mine?" Madame Breuvart spat the words out.

"So you knew him?"

"No, no. I do not know him. I do not know who you mean."

"And yet you've come all the way from France to the very spot where Gabriel Daggers was drowned a few weeks ago."

The Frenchwoman looked steadily at him for a few moments. "I repeat, monsieur, I know nothing."

FEELING for his cigarette case, Mr. Cork sighed. "Very well, madame, we'll leave it at that. But now I have to ask you a favour. I'm afraid we have had a serious accident with our car. On your way back to the hotel, will you please speak to the first fishing party you meet, and ask them to bring help as quickly as possible?"

"It is a pleasure," said Madame Breuvart. "But what sort of accident?"

"A very bad accident, I'm afraid. A man has been killed."

"One of your party?"

"A man that none of us has seen before in our lives. A man, like yourself, who was also interested in the Black Brae." Mr. Cork spoke slowly and emphatically.

"Where is this man?"

"He's lying in the wreck of my car at the bottom of the burn a little way down the river."

Without a word she started to climb the bank. Robert offered a hand to help her. As he did so, he looked at Mr. Cork, who nodded agreement.

"I think I ought to tell you," said Robert, "that this man has died a particularly violent death. It's not really the sort of thing. . . ."

"I appreciate your thought for me," interrupted Madame Breuvart. "But, in the years of the war, we people in France have unhappily had experience of these things. Where is he?"

Robert pointed, and she walked purposefully in the direction of the burn, seemingly careless whether the others accompanied her or not. Mr. Cork and Robert kept on her heels, with Anna a few yards behind.

Slipping down the wall of rock on her stocky strong limbs, she splashed into the puddles of the burn and put her head on one side to examine the upside-down corpse of the man in the car. Robert was still helping Mr. Cork down the slopes as she tried to open the car doors. But they both heard the Frenchwoman's first startled exclamation when she saw the body.

"Mon Dieu," she said, and then in a whisper, "it's him."

Mr. Cork clambered down beside her. "You know this man?"

"It is useless for me to deny it."

"Who is he?"

"What interest is it of yours?"

"I believe that he may have been an associate of a man name Kurt, who is a guest at the Estuary Hotel."

The Frenchwoman shrugged.

"You may not recognize him by the name of Kurt. But he was sitting in the corner of the dining-room last night and it was the sight of him, I think, that put you off your dinner."

"I know the man you mean," she said quietly.

"Was this fellow here an accomplice of his?"

Madame Breuvart nodded.

"What sort of man was he?"

For answer, Madame Breuvart turned to the wreckage of the car and spat.

THE storm clouds, which had been gathering all day, settled darkly over Edendale. Rain was falling along the glen, loading the burns with foamy, brown water and clothing the hills in folds of white mist.

Montague Cork sat at the open window of his sitting-room. Although it was past eleven o'clock, well past his regular bedtime, he was reluctant to retire to his room. Whether it was the oppressive effect of the impending storm, the nervous strain of the events of the past day, or the nagging wakefulness of his thoughts, Mr. Cork was filled with foreboding. He stood there, alone at the window, like a tired sentry, fighting sleep and searching the shadows for intangible enemies.

In the gloom of the room behind him, Robert's rhythmic breathing from the armchair told Mr. Cork that sleep had already overtaken the younger man. He should have gone to bed earlier, like Anna. But Robert, exhausted as he was by the physical effort of the fight at the Black Brae and all that had come after, had, nevertheless, insisted on sitting up with Mr. Cork. It was better that he slept. Anna, too.

Anna had been pale and silent after dinner, as if she, too, shared Mr. Cork's fears for the night. Mr. Cork was relieved when she said, early in the evening,

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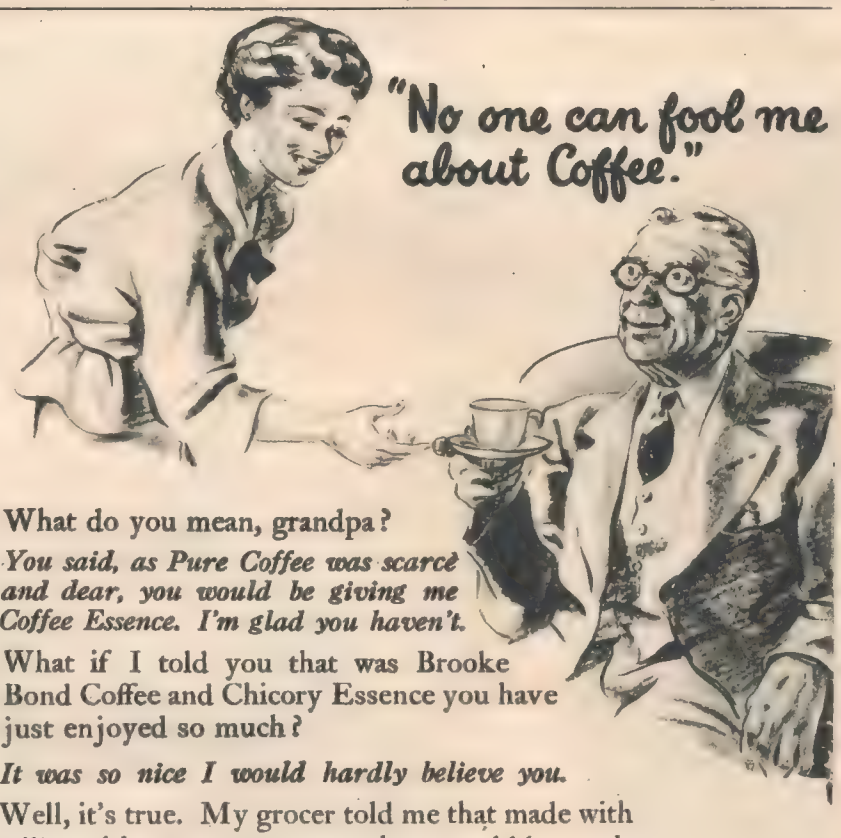

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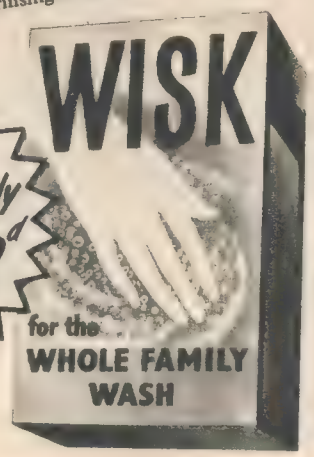

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that she was going to bed. She was safe there, behind a locked door and in a room guarded from approach through the window by the precipitous rock of the bay. Mr. Cork took comfort from that.

And yet, what was it he dreaded? There was nothing, or almost nothing, which had happened during that eventful day on the Black Brae which could not be explained, as Colonel Johnson and Mr. Mackenzie and the police sergeant explained it, by that one word "poachers."

"Mark my words, Muster Cork," said the police sergeant firmly. "The poachers up here are verra desperate men."

"What do you expect," said Mr. Mackenzie phlegmatically, "with fush fetching nine shillings the pound?"

NOTHING that Mr. Cork said could shake local opinion. The Black Brae had always been a favourite pool of the netters; hence the hooks which had been sunk in the bottom. It was typical of the poachers to send a man to spy out the land. And, if they were interfered with, the poachers would stop at nothing; even stealing a car.

Mr. Cork protested that this fellow was armed. But the police sergeant, rejoicing in the news that the man who was killed was a stranger, and that he himself would not get into bad odour in the village by pursuing the case, expressed no surprise. That the Frenchwoman had identified him was simply regarded as valuable confirmation that this was a gang of poachers from far afield.

The police sergeant had tried to appease Mr. Cork by promising that immediate measures would be taken, first thing in the morning, to trace Kurt and his companion, who had temporarily disappeared. He also undertook to take a statement at the earliest opportunity from Madame Breuvart who, after leaving Mr. Cork and getting help from Sir George Sanderson, fishing the next beat down the river, had also not been seen since. But nobody worried about that except Mr. Cork. The police sergeant was anxious to make his report and summon help from the headquarters at Dornoch.

After an hour's talk with the local authorities, Mr. Cork became almost ashamed of his own fears. After all, if he were right, the county police would ferret it out when they came over in the morning. Meanwhile, it was worse than useless to take anybody into his confidence about Daggers.

Gabriel Daggers was officially dead. Even the fishing bag loaded with stones could be fitted in with the poacher theory. Suppose Snatcher, for example, himself poaching salmon in the Black Brae, had inadvertently discovered the body and the fishing bag. Wouldn't it have been his first thought to keep out of trouble by weighting the bag and leaving it to somebody else to make the discovery?

There might even be a reasonable and fairly innocent explanation for the Frenchwoman's interest in the Black Brae. Was it possible that Madame Breuvart, like Anna, had at some time been the victim of Gabriel Daggers's attentions?

But, while Mr. Cork was reasoning his way from one improbability to another, while the local police sergeant was still pencilling in his notebook, the conviction that he was right and that all the others were wrong, became a sickly certainty again.

Jock, the porter, brought the news that the telephone lines were out of order. The fact that the phone was dead was discovered when, in anticipation of the social needs of another fatal accident inquiry, Mr. Mackenzie had given instructions to call Dornoch for urgent supplies of whisky. Finding the hotel instrument out of order, Jock had gone down to the doctor's house to phone from there. But Edendale was cut off. Somewhere along the twenty miles of moorland road between the coast and the south, the lines were down.

"The storm is responsible," said Mr. Mackenzie, looking up the glen. And the police sergeant agreed.

So they were cut off from the outside world altogether until Jock, the hall porter, accompanied by the police sergeant, took the car into Dornoch in the morning: the sergeant to report the accident to his superiors, and Jock to carry out the more solemn duty of trying to raise a few cases of whisky for Mr. Mackenzie's hotel. Nobody, except Mr. Cork, thought anything more about it. Edendale was accustomed to being cut off.

But what if somebody had deliberately cut the lines. . . .

Mr. Cork was disturbed in his theorizing by the sound of a car starting up in the yard behind the hotel. He wondered if it was Jock parking one of the guest's cars for the night. But, within a few seconds, he saw the headlights as the car nosed round the yard to the front of the hotel and then through the gates down the hill to the village. He watched the car cross the bridge and head up the moorland road. Perhaps Mackenzie had decided after all to send Jock to Dornoch. Mr. Cork looked at his watch, and yawned. It was after half past eleven. He would have to shake up Robert and get to bed.

TURNING back into the room, he switched on a tablelamp and smiled at Robert sprawled on the couch among the newspapers of the day before yesterday. Then he opened the door and looked out into the hall lined with stags' antlers, coloured fishing prints and a collection of unspeakable brass pots arranged on carved teak furniture which Mr. Mackenzie, or Mr. Mackenzie's father, had brought back with him from India years before.

The hall, as Mr. Cork expected, was unoccupied. Even the stone slab adjoining the office, where the salmon were laid out for admiration at the end of each fishing day, was empty. Jock had presumably packed up the fish and labelled them in readiness for the carrier in the morning.

Looking around him, Mr. Cork was surprised to notice that the front door of the hotel was wide open. Normally, Jock locked it as soon as he went to bed about 10.30 p.m. None of the guests ever used it after that. Most of them, lazy after fishing, retired early. The only explanation was that the door had been left open by the person who took out the car. Mr. Cork, with his tidy ways, went over to the door to lock it again, but he was stopped before he could get there by a voice on the stairs.

"Is that you, Cork?"

He looked up. Outlined on the banisters was the dishevelled figure of Colonel Johnson, his skinny frame wrapped closely in a dressing-gown and his feet tucked in a pair of red slippers. "Did you hear that car driving off just now, Cork?" Colonel Johnson spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, I did," said Mr. Cork. "I wondered who it was."

"So did I."

"I thought maybe it was Jock going to Dornoch."

"At this time of night? Never heard of such a thing."

Colonel Johnson shuffled down the stairs. "I don't like it, Cork. You know, I'm not sleeping very well these days, not since I lost that big fish. My joints are giving me trouble. I was wide awake when that car started up. And do you know what I think?" Colonel Johnson joined Mr. Cork in the hall. "What I think, Cork, from the sound of that car, is that it was mine. I intend to go out and have a look."

"You ought to be careful, Colonel, you'll catch your death of cold. Are you sure it's your car?"

"Of course I'm not sure, Cork. But it's an old car. I've had it a long time and it coughs a bit, if you know what I mean, over the self-starter. I thought I recognized the cough."

"Let me look for you," said Mr. Cork.

"That's very decent of you, Cork. It would relieve my mind. I park it under the lean-to shed which you come to just as you enter the yard. You can't miss it."

Outside the door, Mr. Cork took a quick look about him and went round to the yard at the back of the hotel.

Colonel Johnson's car had gone. Mr. Cork had often noticed it there when he was parking his own.

"This is a scandal," said Colonel Johnson, taking a long pull at his glass. "We must rouse Mackenzie at once."

Robert, still half-asleep, rubbed his eyes and stretched his arms. "Sorry, sir," he said. "I just couldn't keep awake. What's the time?"

Mr. Cork briefly described what had happened. Robert looked at them both for a moment, then jumped quickly to his feet.

"Excuse me," he said, starting for the door.

"What is it?"

"I must see if Anna's all right. Best to make sure, sir." Robert sprang up the stairs, three at a time, with Mr. Cork hastening after him. Colonel Johnson, still clutching his glass, watched them from the hall.

Outside Anna's door, Robert tried the handle. He knocked, gently at first, and then with increasing determination. There was no answer.

He looked at Mr. Cork. "She behaved very strangely this evening. I'm sure she had something on her mind. And when we were on the river together, remember, she talked wildly of going to see Daggers. Suppose she's gone out looking for him in old Johnson's car?"

"She wouldn't do a foolish thing like that." Mr. Cork looked at Robert, as if he were searching his eyes for inspiration. "Even if Anna had a silly idea like that, she couldn't do anything about it. She doesn't know where Daggers is any more than we do."

"But suppose Daggers sent her a message. If he's the villain we think he is, he's probably feeling pretty desperate at the moment, and it's the sort of thing he might do. Do we smash the door down, or take a chance?"

"We use the key," said Mr. Cork, pointing.

The key was lying on the side of the passage, half covered by the strip of carpet. With a hot hand, Robert turned the lock and swung open the door. Although the electric light was off, there was light enough from the window to see that Anna's bed was empty. The clothes were thrown back as if someone had jumped out of bed in a hurry.

Mr. Cork said grimly: "Have you got that stalking rifle?"

"In my room."

"Get it, and join me downstairs in the sitting-room. We'll commandeer the hotel car."

AS Robert stowed the rifle into the boot of the hotel car, a flash of lightning signalled that the storm which had threatened all day had broken over Edendale. A clap of thunder reverberated round the bay and the rain broke through as if a sluice-gate had opened in the clouds.

"You drive," said Mr. Cork. "We'll try the Black Brae first. That seems to be the fashionable rendezvous. And get there as fast as you can."

Robert half hung his head out of the side window for better visibility of the road. The hotel car wheezed in its springs and the engine roared discontentedly. But, somehow, he rushed it round corners, raced it up hills and sent it snorting safely through water splashes. They were topping forty on half a road which nobody had ever manoeuvred faster than twenty miles an hour before.

"How shall we find her when we get there? . . . If we get there," Robert said as the car bumped ominously on the verge.

Mr. Cork opened his eyes to light a cigarette. "One person could tell us."

"Snatcher?"

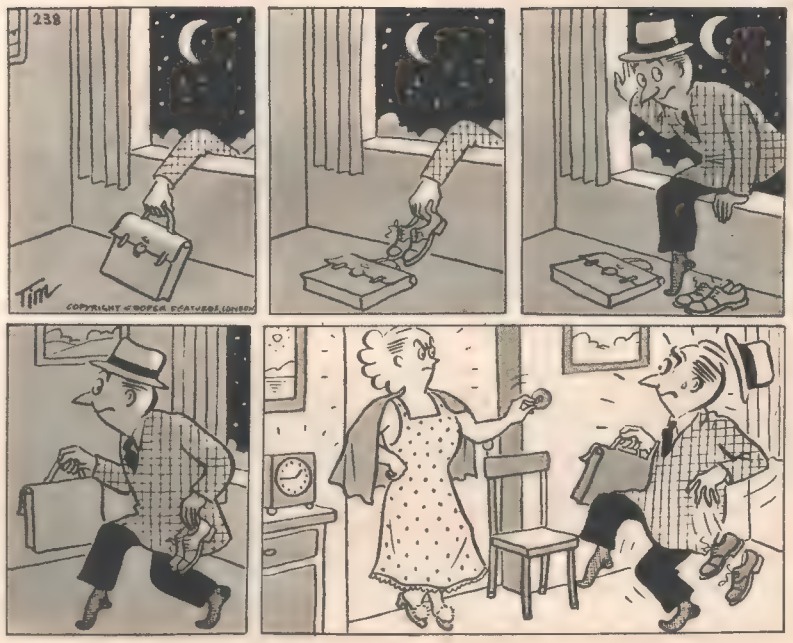
"Yes. Take it easy now. We're coming to that hairpin bend over the burn. If she's here, we ought to see the car in one of the passing places."

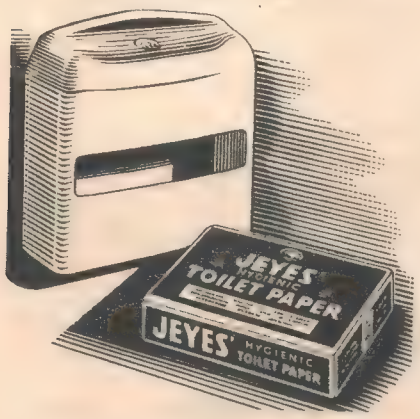
Robert reduced speed. As he did so, he felt a cold ring press sharply into the nape of his neck.

"You'll keep going," said a soft Highland voice from the darkness behind them. "And you, Muster Cork, you'll not be looking round."

To be continued next week

OH, JOHNNY! *by TIM*





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RETURN OF MERI

Continued from page 17

memorial to remember the dead of the most recent war.

"This is the wording for the plaque which is to go on the house where Meri was born," said Thomas Jenkins.

Watkins the Monumental Mason took the slip of paper and read it.

"'Home is where we start from,'" he muttered. "Obvious, Thomas Jenkins, and the grave is where we end up, eh?"

Watkins the Monumental Mason, as do all men who are in constant touch with death, took the Final Event always with a serious humour.

Thomas Jenkins was not amused.

"Carve your best, Watkins, and please have it ready by July 14, and send the bill to the Parish Council."

JULY came in with an excess of heat. The sea was a trembling blue, the far inland hills of Wales an ache of mist, and the little white-washed houses by the western sea had the warm, friendly smell of heated stone.

The shingle before the sands throbbed in the sunshine and the seaweed left dry by the high tides crackled and burst under walking feet.

The film star, Meri, had promised to come. On the day before the fourteenth, Watkins the Monumental Mason fixed the plaque to the house, and Thomas Jenkins placed over it a square of blue velvet on a running cord. Half a dozen times he pulled the tape and disclosed the sheet of black marble with the message for posterity. And all the night of the thirteenth, the village policeman went occasionally by in case some humorist should have added to or defaced the wording.

With the girl, Meri, had promised to come photographers. The hotel was fully booked and Mrs. Richards-Waring was heard to say that she wished half a dozen film stars had been born in the village.

The unveiling was to take place at 2 p.m.

It was at 6 a.m. that the whales came to the warm village by the sea. A whole school of them, about eighteen. They came far up the beach as if in great longing for the land and the green places of the valley. They came in just as the tide was turning; were left as the water went out again to its appointed places.

It was Thomas Jenkins himself who discovered them. He was down at the turn of the tide in search of driftwood. On his way to the sands he had paused to look at the little plaque on the house. He had lifted up the velvet and had been very pleased. He had gone on his way singing to himself. It was only when crossing the slabs of shingle in the mist of the morning that he heard and saw the commotion in the shallow water.

In a moment he understood what had happened. Once before in his lifetime whales had come in from the sea and had lodged on the sand. They had died rather dreadfully, slowly and painfully, the first dozen being helped by the village butcher. Eventually a firm of candle makers had come and collected the carcasses. But before that there had been the most dreadful smell, a smell which had seeped into the village and far inland, driving people from their homes and making strong men sick. A curious smell which had cured one old lady of the asthma but which had brought on three miscarriages higher up the valley.

Whales on this day, and a film star coming. The weather was hot. Perhaps in another eight hours the whole of the shore would be horrid in smell? Jenkins walked up and down quickly, looking at the whales. They were too heavy for anyone in the village to shift. There was nothing to be done.

Later that morning the whales were killed by local sportsmen and the great bodies were left quiet under the scorching sun. And all the time Thomas Jenkins went about with his head tilted in the air, sniffing in the breezes from the beach. He was a little reassured after consulting Mrs. Richards-Waring. She said that she thought there was no danger of the beasts going to decay for a day at least. And she added that probably the arrival of the monsters would give added publicity to the village.

IT was two o'clock before the film star, Meri, ventured out from the hotel and came into her childhood playplace once again.

She was thin in the body but artificially full in the breast. Her hair was of the same glorious colour as when she had been a child; a gleam of copper. She walked carefully along the village street, paying more attention to her dress than to the crowd.

Behind her came a little retinue of men. By her side walked Mrs. Richards-Waring in a new coat with a tassel hanging from the back of it.

At the house where Meri had been born waited the Parish Council, headed by Thomas Jenkins. Watkins the Monumental Mason was in the background, black as his own shadow in his Sunday-best suit. A brass band had been hired from the town up the valley. They stood in a circle beyond the sedate Parish Councillors, very bright in their uniforms. As the film star came into sight along the road from the hotel they started to play "Entry of the Gladiators," a singularly inappropriate tune helped to incongruity by the fact that the trombonist, being hard of hearing, played "Land of My Fathers."

By now the film star was close to the house where she had been born. The cameramen pressed round her, and Thomas Jenkins got ready for his little speech.

"It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you to our midst, Miss Meri. I'm sure that you have many happy memories of your childhood days in this village by the sea. Today we are going to unveil a plaque to your memory—" there was a pause and then smiles as Thomas Jenkins, realizing his mistake, spoke again: ". . . memory of the happy days when you were young here."

The film star smiled gracefully and in a lisping voice answered: "It is my pleasure, too. I spent many happy days in this village and I still dream sometimes of the house where I was born. I am delighted to be asked to unveil this plaque."

There was a worried silence then, for the unveiling was Mrs. Richards-Waring's job. Thomas Jenkins raised an arm in the air as a sort of benevolent gesture. Immediately the deaf trombonist thought that this was a signal for the next tune and he started "Home Sweet Home."

Thomas Jenkins cleared his throat, in intense worry. First whales, and now this.

"I'm sure, Miss Meri, that you would not mind if one of our most respected inhabitants did the unveiling?" He turned towards Mrs. Richards-Waring. "It has been arranged that this good lady should do the unveiling. We would not ask you to soil your hands with string pulling."

HIS words were unfortunate. Immediately Mrs. Richards-Waring straightened herself, finding another three inches in the length of her body.

"If it is a matter of soiling my hands, I shall not bother," she said.

She gathered up her tassel from behind her and marched away along the road, a solitary militant figure in the sunshine. Thomas Jenkins turned to the film star.

"Perhaps you would now care to unveil the plaque, Miss Meri?"

The film star said, suddenly unsmiling, "I'm not a second fiddle to a barmaid. Come on, boys."

She spoke to the publicity men behind her. They came forward and around her like a bodyguard around a commissar, or like auctioneer's men around a precious vase.

"You are going?" called Thomas Jenkins.

"Yes. I did not come here to be insulted."

Meri and her party clambered away with their cameras over the sea wall to the whales. Most of the crowd of village people followed them. Only the Parish Council and Thomas Jenkins and Watkins the Monumental Mason remained behind.

After a while Thomas Jenkins said, "We'd better go, too. Unveil the plaque yourself, man."

Watkins the Monumental Mason went forward and did so. The velvet cloth rucked back and the marble slab sparkled in the sunshine. But no one bothered to read it. On the sands, one of the men had upended an old fish crate. Had set its water-smoothed boards against the side of one of the dead whales.

As the Parish Council and Thomas Jenkins and Watkins the Monumental Mason went down, the film star, Meri, was mounting the whale, using the box as a step. All watched with some marvel at her acrobatics as she slithered about on the whale's back, but never fell. Then one of the men reached up the crate to her, and she set it on the back of the monster

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" In all, I slew three hundred and seventeen in single combat," said the Baron. " I beg your pardon, one was killed falling from a tree, which I inadvertently felled when I brought my sword into contact with its trunk."

" And the sword ? " asked the Younger Member.

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Continued from next column

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Continued in previous column

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2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated Dec. 2, and in JOHN BULL, dated Dec. 9, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

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Add 2, 3 or 4 Words to any of these "EXAMPLES"

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In Ivan's Home
Bravely
The Test Is
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One Dark Night
A Lot Of Rot
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Soap-box Orator
All The Others
When The Fog Lifted
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In A Stage Whisper

Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions

Memory Of.....
Could Be....., But
Remains A .....
Doesn't ..... Much
Through Her .....
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Across Clues XWORD 709

3. Average man doesn't like to see fine estate going to
4. Conscientious artist can easily overdo it if studying this
11. Man out for some specific reform won't content himself merely with such support
13. It will probably be difficult to assess this at once
14. Vessels of differing shapes and sizes are made for different these
15. Good removals firm won't leave you with this

Down Clues

1. A little vinegar can pep them up quite a lot
2. Singer keen on keeping his voice in tip-top form doesn't forget the importance of
5. This may show that an enemy's defences are vulnerable
6. Towards summer's close, this adds its touch of colour to the countryside
7. Crushing one may silence a weak opposition
8. Strikes have been known to make demands on
9. Man who tries to darn his own socks may soon get one with needle
10. Any defect in this is bound to tell, sooner or later
12. These of some of our rivers make a day's boating less attractive

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B. .....

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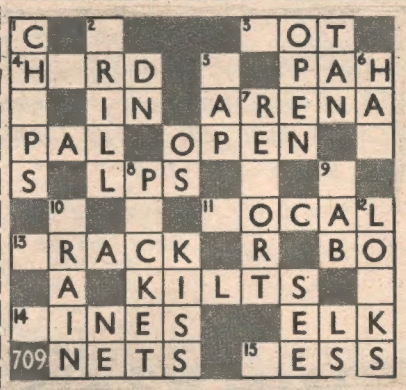

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and posed herself to the instructions of the photographers. She sat on the box and like a hussy of the fairgrounds she lifted up her frock and set its hem on her thighs, just where her stockings began. Then she crossed her legs and smiled as if this was the ultimate happiness, a pure joy in the hard sunshine.

The cameras clicked. The people of the village were very quiet; only in the far distance could be heard the sound of Mrs. Richards-Waring beating a carpet, a task which she had never been seen to do before or after that day.

As soon as the cameras had taken the first photograph Meri lowered her skirts quickly. With relief Thomas Jenkins whispered to Watkins the Monumental Mason, "See, man, she only shows her legs for the sake of business."

Watkins himself seemed disappointed that it was all over so soon. There was hope in his voice as he said, "Wait, she is going to sit again."

And indeed she was. But this time she was very decent. She sat squarely on the fish box, put her elbow on her knees and her chin on her fist and gazed moodily out to sea. It was like the famous "Thinker," only female and with clothes on.

The cameras clicked again and she stood up and climbed down from the back of the whale and her men surrounded her carefully.

MERI went back to London on the afternoon train with her entourage. The station staff said that she seemed sad as the train took her away.

It was late in the evening of the very next day that Thomas Jenkins had a telegram. Such a long one that it was more in the nature of a letter and must have cost a mint of money. It was from Meri. It said that a firm of amusement caterers had seen the photograph of the film star which had appeared in an evening paper. They were badly in need of whales to stuff for various sideshows at travelling fairs. They had contacted Meri, seeing as she was sitting on one and seemed to have so many around her. They were offering two thousand pounds for the carcasses. Would the village sell?

Thomas Jenkins cried when at last he understood the meaning of all the words. Joy was in him that Meri had not forgotten the beginning.

He sent his reply. The whales were removed on the next day. A week later a cheque came from Meri for two thousand pounds.

Next spring Meri came home again. She came this time alone, on holiday. Everyone was glad of that. Doubtless the publicity men would have made her pose in a bathing costume; she who hated water. It would all have been wrong, in this place where she had started from, and to which she had now returned in mutual love.

THE END

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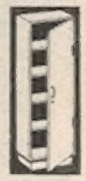

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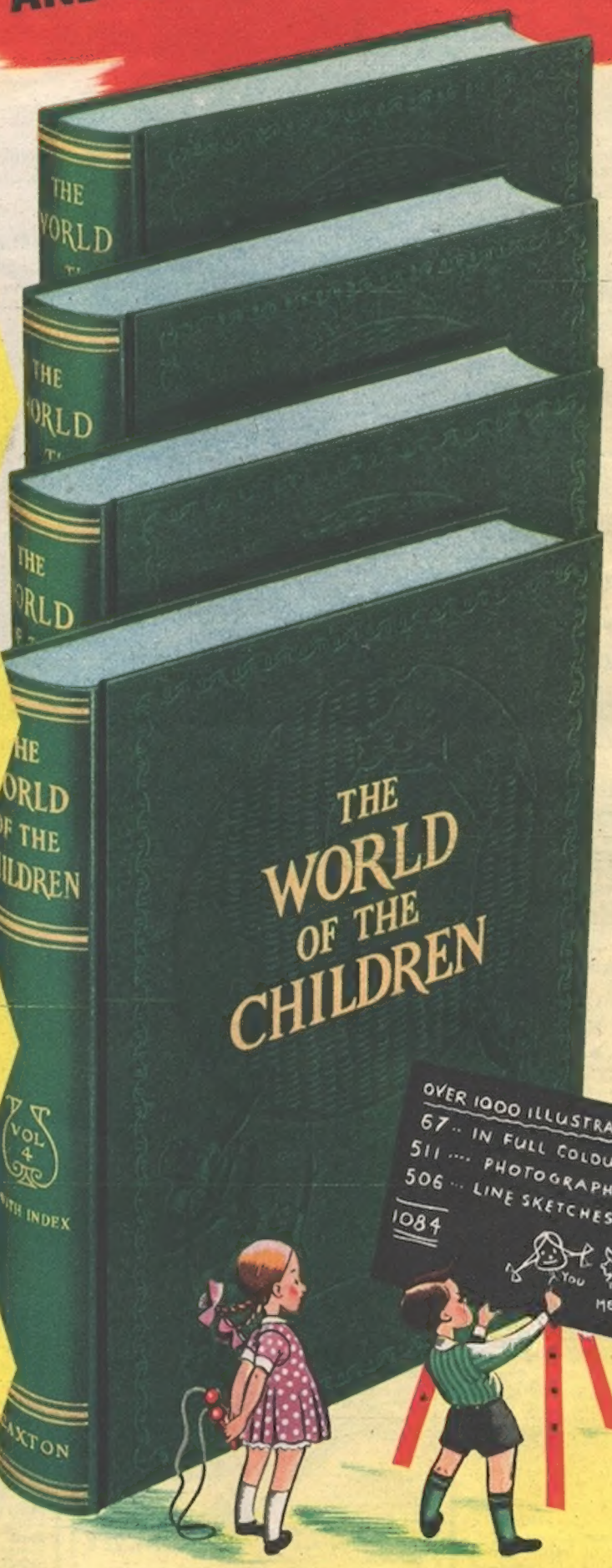

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